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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes findings of an international study which compares the early childhood education and day care systems in 10 industralized nations: France, Great Britain, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Israel, Poland, Denmark, Sweden, USSR, and the United States. Provisions for children from infancy to school entrance are considered. Historical perspectives on early education and care are reviewed and examples are given of three markedly different systems which provide day care and education to young children today. The bulk of the report consists of comparisons among national systems along such dimensions as goals; composition of classes; training, selection, and supervision of staff; features of the physical plant; design of curriculum; and methods of teaching. The main contrasts observed between the United States and other countries studied include the absence of active research and program evaluation in most other countries and a lack of self-criticism on educational issues in countries other than the United States, Great Britain, and Sweden. Preschool personnel in other countries are said to have a sense of conviction and purposiveness that may influence feeling of security in children and effectiveness in teachers. The report calls into question the assumptions of United States educators that early education requires (1) low student-teacher ratios and (2) more stringent teacher education requirements than exist in other countries. It is noted that the early childhood goals of character development emphasized abroad appear to be lacking in United States systems. (GO)

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FINAL REPORT

Title: Staff Studies and Planning Cross-National Research
Office of Child Development Grant: CB-191
Principle Investigators: Nance M. Robinson
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Introduction

Recognizing that the United States was entering a new era in public programs for infants and young children, the present project was proposed as an effort to gather data from a number of countries in the developed world which had extensive--and for the most part long-standing--programs of education and day care for infants and preschool children. Despite the high level of activity which has characterized the past decade in our country's efforts to work out suitable and effective programs, it is clear that inexperience and lack of manpower have been serious barriers to the establishment of broadscale programs for young children and families. It was felt, therefore, that there was much to be gained from a comparative study of staffing patterns and similar matters in countries which had undertaken such programs in the past, and particularly in countries which had undergone successive modifications of programs.

Accordingly, the present project was planned to complement an ongoing international study of early child care in which the principal investigators are participants. For some years, they have been involved in the work of the International Study Group for Early Child Care, a coalition of child care specialists from twelve countries interested in exchanging information relevant to the partnership between society and the family in the care and upbringing of infants and young children. Since its inception in 1969, this project has had the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. During the academic year 1972-1973, the investigators were on leave from the University of Washington and in residence in Paris, in order to bring together the final stages of the work of the International Study Group and to prepare overview materials summarizing the twelve monographs, which by then were to have been completed by the participants in their respective countries.

Unfortunately, the cooperation among those involved in the International Study Group did not prove as favorable as had been hoped. Not only were the original monographs not completed in several of the countries during this period (and indeed up to the present), but the supplementary materials needed for the present study were not forthcoming either, for a variety of reasons. In particular, it proved difficult to obtain detailed specific national information from several participants in socialist countries. Whatever the reasons for the difficulties in communication, they proved a serious handicap to the present study.

The rather optimistic plans for the present study included detailed information to be gathered on staffing patterns, administrative personnel, training patterns, facilities, educational programs, and a set of

miscellaneous matters having to do with illness/health, parent cooperation, etc. Accordingly, three sources of information had been planned and were subsequently used:

(1) The monographs being prepared for the International Study Group, which are comprehensive treatments of the entire system of early child care in each country, concentrating on the partnership between society and the family for the care of the infant and young child. These were, and are, being prepared according to a common outline drawn up in a series of meetings of the International Study Group, 1969-1971. The following monographs have been completed: France, Great Britain, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Two others are in first draft form in English: Israel and Yugoslavia. The Polish and Soviet manuscripts are in preparation but have not as yet been translated, and it seems doubtful that the monographs from Cuba or India will be completed. The series is being published by Gordon and Breach, Science Publishers, as issues of the journal EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CARE, and as separate books in both hard-back and soft-back editions.

(2) A questionnaire sent to the International Study Group participants in each country, covering the major questions for which the present study was designed. A copy of the questionnaire is attached in Appendix I.

(3) Brief visits to a number of the countries, in part to gather some first-hand information but basically to arrange for the completion of the written materials needed for this study. Visits were made to (France), Great Britain, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia for that purpose.

In view of the fact that the original plan of gathering extensive original materials in the form of a comparative investigation proved unworkable, a compromise has been reached in the present report. The material obtained has been incorporated in an overview summary of early education from an international point of view. This paper provides a multi-demensional scheme by which to begin to analyze the systems for early education and day care as they exist among industrialized countries. Included is a description of salient trends and variables seen by the principal investigators as most important in structuring a comparative method for understanding widely differing systems of education and day care. Examples from the international scene are employed as illustrative (rather than definitive) of variations among the relevant dimensions. This overview is considerably more subjective than had originally been comtemplated, but it represents the distillation of several years of exposure to early child care in a number of nations outside the United States and affords, it is hoped, a perspective from which to view the characteristics of the emerging American "system" of early education.

The original grant was in the amount of $9,312, of which $7,995.33 was actually expended and the rest returned to the granting agency. Approximately 10% time for 9 months was contributed by Dr. Halbert Robinson, while approximately 25% time for 11 months was applied by Dr. Nancy Robinson in pursuit of the goals of this investigation.

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Day Care and Preschool Institutions: Relevant Dimensions for Understanding Structural and Practical Differences among Systems

A. Introduction

In practically all the developed countries of the world, there is a surge of enthusiasm about what can and should be done for very young children. In the areas of day care and early education, moreover, there have been extensive innovations and expansion of programs. In recent years, hopes have been very high--perhaps they are a little tempered today--that given a good start in life, almost all children can grow into the kind of adult the society admires and desires; that none will be wanting in skills, or motivation to become a responsible and productive citizen. Some professionals and planners now are beginning to question whether all the goals currently held for children are reachable by any means currently known. Still, one might characterize the period beginning in 1965 until today as an era of increased dedication to the optimal development of the infant and preschool child.

Some countries, prior to this era, already had long-standing and highly developed programs (e.g., France and the U.S.S.R.). No nation has had to begin its modern programs completely de novo, though in some, private family arrangements have traditionally been much more important than group care of any sort (e.g., Switzerland and the U.S.). Part of community living has always involved some sharing of responsibilities for the care and socialization of the young. Yet, some countries have had much farther to go than others to attain a semblance of the programs which they now see as desirable. Among those whose services have been most fragmented and least well developed (especially in the 0-4 age range) is the United States.

The reader must be careful to note that the "preschool" age range varies as much as two years from one country to another. In Poland, Sweden, and the U.S.S.R., for example, regular schooling begins at age 7. The modal age for beginning school is 6 in Belgium, France, Hungary, the Netherlands, German-speaking Switzerland, and the United States. In Great Britain, Israel, and French-speaking Switzerland, compulsory schooling begins at age 5.

It is important to keep these differences in mind when considering the proportions of eligible children enrolled in preschools. In England, virtually all 5- and 6-year-olds are enrolled in school, although the percentages of 3- and 4-year-olds in preschools are presently very low; in other countries, 5- and 6-year-olds are included in the preschool population. There is, however, talk in many countries (e.g., Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the U.S.S.R.) of lowering the age of compulsory beginning--which corresponds with a clearly visible trend throughout the world to begin organized educational programs for an earlier age level.

The reader is also cautioned to be aware of differences in nomenclature. For purposes of clarity, we will use the term creche to refer to group settings intended for infants up to as old as three years, and preschools to

refer to institutions for children from age three to school entry, regardless of whether these are full-day or part-day programs. We will avoid the term kindergarten, which refers in the United States and Israel to programs for 5-year-olds only, but in the U.S.S.R. refers to programs for 3- through 6-year-olds, and in France specifically to the private counterparts of the public preschools (ecoles maternelles) for ages 2½ through 5. Nurseries and day nurseries are usually the equivalent of creches; nursery schools in England and the United States are for 3- and 4-year-olds. There is much room for confusion in this field!

B. Historical Perspectives

1. Voluntary Beginnings

The common pattern for the earliest efforts at group care of children consisted of voluntary daytime havens opened by good-hearted people who discovered the appalling conditions in which young children were existing, and could not bear to turn away. The majority of these early programs were established about the middle of the 19th century (though some, as in France, date back to the 18th century), when the physical survival of children was much more precarious than it is today. What we now tend to call "disadvantaged" children were the first clients; their families were the urban poor and subject to all the social ills to which that group is vulnerable. While the mothers were at work, many of the children, even tiny ones, looked after themselves or each other as best they could. In Hungary, for example, it was the accidental fires started by these untended children that effectively drew them to public attention.

The facilities of these first programs were mostly custodial, designed to keep the children safe from physical harm. Though today we would characterize such provisions as unacceptable, there was often a measure of compassion and good will among the volunteers which was most impressive. As the facilities became more firmly established, low-paid and, for the most part, uninspired women were hired to replace the volunteers. Much of the original feeling of purpose and enthusiasm vanished, and minimal, routine child maintenance became the rule--with its damaging consequences. Group day care was originally intended exclusively for poor children; no family which could manage other arrangements considered using these places. In their isolation, the centers tended to deteriorate, and remained at low ebb so long as they were considered merely institutions for the temporary storage of poor children.

Voluntary associations are still of major importance in providing basic services in several countries. In Israel, especially, services tend to be voluntary. In England, the widespread and informal play groups are sponsored by private agencies and cooperatives and are a major factor in recreational/educational services. In many other countries, including the socialist countries, volunteer organizations supplement public services by building and maintaining playground equipment, providing special experiences for the children, etc.

2. National Crises and the Employment of Women

The origins of the first group care facilities can, in most countries, be traced to the period when the Industrial Revolution was firmly established and women were in large numbers intering the labor market. Historically, one can plot much of the subsequent waxing and waning of group care by national crises: revolutions, wars, economic disruptions, etc. In the U.S.S.R., for example, though some centers had existed under Tsarist rule, it was during the calamity of World War I and the Revolution which followed, that group care centers were first established on a large scale. In fact, remarkable proportions of existing resources were devoted to evacuating and caring for young children at a time when food, shelter, medical care, and other necessities were in extremely short supply.

In times of stress or of prosperity, with concomitant full employment, women have usually been beckoned to the labor force. It is this factor above all which, at least until recently, has determined the priorities given to programs for child care, and which has indirectly affected public sentiment about the services. Thus, following World War II, in those countries which had escaped the ravages of a war fought at home (e.g., Sweden, Switzerland, the U.S.), women were urged to "get back into the kitchen" to make room for men returning from military service. This was not true of the less fortunate nations. In France, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union, for example, day care services were expanded considerably during this period.

3. The "Liberation" of Women

Another factor related to the establishment of group care programs has been the attitude toward women's role in the national life outside of the home. The child-rearing patterns of the Israeli kibbutzim, for example, grew largely from the philosophical and political conviction that women should engage fully and freely in the social and economic life of the community. In those socialist countries where, as a matter of principal, all adults are expected to work outside the home, provisions for group care have steadily increased; in those less strictly committed to this tenet (e.g., Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia) there has been a waxing and waning of such services, correlated with the need for women in the labor force.

At present, in some industrialized nations, a conflict exists between the desire and for need of women to work outside the home and a general lack of employment opportunities. In such a conflict situation, the children are in danger of becoming pawns in the political and economic arena--their own needs being lost sight of midst the discussion of their mothers' needs.

4. Preschool Education vs Day Care

Especially in the capitalist countries, preschool education typically originated for children from relatively well-off families, who contracted for part-day experiences designed to broaden their children's horizons, to

furnish playmates, to provide settings for stimulation and socialization, etc. A schism remained between the caring function and the educative function of preschool institutions, and in some countries this schism continues today: poor (and otherwise needy) children are given full-day care but not necessarily much education, while the opposite is true for the nursery school or kindergarten. This categorization is still apparent in many countries (e.g., Switzerland, Israel, and the United States).

In other countries, this division has virtually disappeared (especially above the creche level). France, for example, began in the 18th century to offer free public education to children from 2½ to school age; to these programs, services were slowly added to care for children who could not go home at lunch-time or at the end of the school day because their mothers were not at home. In most socialist countries, group care is and has for some time been deliberately planned as an educative experience even though the clientele is sometimes limited to children of working mothers. To all intents and purposes, in neither France nor the socialist countries does the nursery school (part-day) program exist.

5. Ideological purposes

Another motive has prompted the founding of preschool educational institutions in the socialist countries: the upbringing of the citizens of the future. These nations hold that it is essential to begin character training during the preschool years, to accustom the child to the collectivity as an active member, and to encourage him to be helpful to his fellow man, to enjoy work and find it honorable, to persevere, to appreciate the beautiful, and to aspire to the highest ideals of the society. The upbringing of the child is seen as too important a task to be entrusted solely to the parents; the young child from birth onwards is a citizen of his society, and his care is perhaps the most important obligation of that society. The place of early upbringing is, relatively speaking accorded very high priority.

6. Compensatory Efforts

The very recent history of the preschool education movement is, in many countries, intertwined with efforts to provide compensatory experiences for disadvantaged or unassimilated groups. Thus, in Israel, there are massive preschool programs aimed at recent immigrants, especially those from North Africa; in Hungary, there are special short-term programs for the children of gypsies who have missed preschool; in Switzerland, programs for children of immigrant laborers; in France, special efforts to reach children of North African and other economically marginal workers; in the United States, programs for children of the poor, many of whom are black; and in India, massive programs for children and families in the backward villages and urban slums. Concern for disadvantaged children--which originally motivated the establishment of custodial day care now lies behind the massive efforts of early compensatory education. Preschools are increasingly being asked to achieve what the society has otherwise failed to accomplish--an equal start for children whose backgrounds reflect inequalities of housing, employment, nutrition, health care, etc.

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It is worthwhile pointing out that such efforts are not entirely new. In the 19th century, Maria Montessori founded a teaching program intended for children from the slums, a systematic method designed to enhance their competence, their independence, and their school achievement. There is an upsurge of interest in her work today, after many years of inattention. Yet, a number of countries seem content to enroll disadvantaged children in regular preschool programs, intensified perhaps but not qualitatively different from those offered to children from non-disadvantaged homes.

7. Infants vs. Older Preschool Children

The historical ups and downs of preschool and day care institutions have not always paralleled the ups and downs of creche facilities. Group care is not easily arranged to meet the needs of the infant and toddler, and furthermore it is extremely expensive. World-wide, there has been a relatively slow expansion of creches and considerable controversy about them. Few countries, even those with "big" creche programs enroll more than 5 to 10 per cent of infants of working mothers. We shall return to this discrepancy later.

8. Interplay of Child Care and Technology

The possibility of meeting children's needs in group care arrangements depends to some degree on the technological development of the society. Group day care is impractical, for example, unless homes are closeby and/or transportation is efficient. Prior to modern vaccines and antibiotics, to allow very young children to experience multiple exposure to illnesses was simply to invite disease and death. The effectiveness of modern medicine is especially evident in creches because infants are particularly susceptible to contagion.

C. Examples of Systems which Provide Day-Care and Education to the Very Young

Before entering upon a detailed discussion of the dimensions along which preschool programs vary, it will be worthwhile to pause briefly to present thumbnail sketches of systems developed by three countries to meet child care needs. We have arbitrarily selected countries whose programs differ markedly: the Soviet Union, Sweden, and France.

1. Early Education in the Soviet Union

It is fitting that we should begin by describing the nurseries and kindergartens in the U.S.S.R., for that country has a very long history of extensive public upbringing programs. Preschool institutions were, in fact, established during the revolution of 1917-1919 in order both to safeguard the children in a time of crisis and shortage, and also to establish a means by which they could be socialized in accordance with the new ideals about socialist citizens. The state very early took upon itself the responsibility to become an active partner with the parents. For a time, residential upbringing for at least some young children was

considered and tried, but was abandoned for a number of reasons. Today, there are extensive medical services and social services; there are subsidies which reduce the cost of children's clothing, milk, etc.

The Soviet Union has a very extensive system of preschools which are highly centralized, well equipped and well staffed, and available to very large numbers of children, especially in the urban areas--where, typically, 85 to 90 percent of children ages 3-7 attend preschools, the majority of those not attending being 3 years old. Nurseries for younger children (5 months to 3 years) serve only about 10 percent of infants. A modern trend is to combine the nurseries with the kindergarten in what are called "nursery kindergarten" facilities. We should note that a very high percentage of mothers in the Soviet Union work outside the home. Though some children, especially infants, are looked after by their grandmothers, the custom of family day care in another home is not very common, both because housing tends to be crowded and because most mothers need better paid work to help support their family. There is, then, no such thing as a part-day preschool, even for children of mothers who do not work. The nursery-kindergartens are open 10-12 hours a day (though an individual child may be there as little as 7 or 8 hours) and children are expected to attend six days a week, whether or not the mother works a six-day week. Most preschools, especially in cities, involve 160-240 children in groups of 15-25 (depending on their ages).

The Soviet Union has perhaps the most highly developed national preschool curriculum of any in the world. Several research institutes (the principal one being the Laboratory for the Study of the Preschool Child, in Moscow) devote their continual attention to the development of new techniques and the revision of old ones in the light of new evidence. Periodically, new editions of curricula are proposed to the various republics. Most of the republics make minor changes in accordance with local practices, but in its essential form this curriculum is found throughout the nation. It requires some daily structured work with children of all ages, prescribed lessons beginning with brief sessions even with infants, but it involves as well many hours of spontaneous play with an emphasis on role-playing and games. Specialized teachers are provided in a few subjects such as gymnastics and music. There is attention to a broad spectrum of children's growth, including physical conditioning, aesthetics, cognition, and character. Indeed, the Soviet word vospitanyi is usually translated as upbringing rather than education. Of great importance is the use of the preschool setting for the development of, for example, cooperative ways of relating to one another; the awareness of the group or collective and its needs, as opposed to those of the individual; and a respect for and enjoyment of work. In recent years, there has been in the preschools more attention to cognitive growth than previously, a greater emphasis on learning problem-solving attitudes and strategies than learning facts, and a greater responsibility to produce readiness for regular school.

There has also recently been a search for more effective ways to encourage creativity in young children, building on a base of directly-taught skills to create new forms of expression, variations upon a central theme, etc., in all forms of constructive expression. Upbringing in groups,

then, forms an important part of the socialization of most children in the Soviet Union. Group programs receive the attention and support of citizens throughout the society because they are highly consonant with the Soviet way of life and the ideological bases of its social and economic organization. Preschools have undergone a number of changes over the years, each reflecting the then-current understanding of the needs of children and their potentials for growth, but they have never failed to reflect the high priorities accorded to children's needs in this society.

2. Early Education in Sweden*

In Sweden, there are very extensive programs of many kinds to support the family in bringing up the infant and preschool child, but there has never been the wholehearted conviction that formal preschool education is essential for most children. Full-day group programs take place in day nurseries which accept children from the age of 6 months to 7 years, while half-day programs are provided in preschools, which cater mainly to 5- and 6-year-old children. Regular school entry is at 7. Despite the high percentage of working mothers (in 1970, 53 per cent of mothers with children under school age worked outside the home, most of them only part-time), public facilities such as these accommodate only a small proportion of Swedish children. As Table 1 indicates, only about 4.8 per cent of children under school age were enrolled in day nurseries in 1971, and only 10.6 per cent in preschools. Group situations provided in 1967 for the care of only about one child in six whose mother worked outside the home. Fees are varied according to the family income, and children with single parents are given priority. In an effort to increase the number of places available in day nurseries, the national government has withdrawn its financial support from preschools and has increased its contribution to day nurseries which provide care for a minimum of five hours a day. Even so, there is now an effort on the part of many local governments to provide preschool facilities for all 6-year-olds whose parents desire it. Although the programs are expanding, the need and demand remain great.

Table 1

Per cent of Cohort of Swedish Children in Group Programs (1971)

Age	Day Nurseries	Preschools	Total
6	5.0	54.5	59.4
5	5.9	13.9	19.8
4	6.0	1.8	7.8
3	5.8	0.3	6.1
2	5.0	--	5.0
1	3.8	--	3.8
Under 1	2.0	--	2.0
Total	4.8	10.6	15.4

*See Berfenstam and William-Olsson, 1973.

The preschools and day nurseries have very similar programs, overlapping primarily for the children 5 and 6 years old. Guidelines are developed by the National Board of Health and Welfare, which has overall responsibility for both sorts of facilities. The teacher is free to use the guidelines as she sees fit, to plan her own flexible program with the children. The educational goals emphasized in the guidelines, and in the classrooms themselves, revolve primarily around attitudes and habits, not knowledge or concepts per se. Fostering a positive attitude toward learning and problem solving; enhancing the ability to express feelings and impressions in creative, constructive activities; encouraging the propensity to cooperate with other children and adults both as leaders and followers; establishing an independent social adjustment--such goals dominate the philosophy of early education in Sweden. School skills such as reading are not taught. Commonalities of approach exist not only because of the guidelines but because teachers have two years of special training in institutions which share a prescribed course of study.

Swedish preschools and nurseries tend to be spacious and well equipped, and most are housed in buildings especially designed for the purpose. There are ample and varied materials for the children's play, and classes are usually no more than 15 children. Facilities tend to be small, with only one or at most a few classes. The child-centered environment is cheerful, aesthetically pleasing, and stimulating.

There is a gentleness of approach to the education and care of young children which can be seen not only in the flexible preschools, with their short days and their emphasis on social-emotional goals, but also in the postponement of regular school to age seven (and even then only a half-day of school). Childhood is a time for growing as a child.

A new set of recommendations by a special commission has recently been published. If it should be carried out, the new day nursery pattern would be built around "sibling groups" of children 2½ to 7 (with separate groups for those 6 months to 30 months), each consisting of 18-20 children and 4 teachers, in buildings constructed to permit varied activities for two sibling groups sharing the same space. It is important to note that, even in the face of overwhelming demands for space in the day nurseries, there is to be no compromise of standards.

Sweden seems to be at a crossroads. Early education is seen as highly desirable, especially for the children living in the "new cities" which are homogeneous and unstimulating for young and old alike, and therefore there is a strong impetus to expand the facilities as rapidly as possible. Yet, to maintain the present high standards implies considerable expense, time, and resources. Whether or not the priorities are high enough to provide quantity and quality simultaneously is a hotly debated issue.

3. Early Education in France*

Very large numbers of French preschool children attend the free, public ecoles maternelles from the time they are two or two-and-a-half until they enter school at age 6. The few private kindergartens do not

*See David and Lezine, in press.

differ substantially from the maternelles. In 1973-74, approximately 44 per cent of the 2½-year-olds are enrolled, 72 per cent of 3-year-olds, 93 per cent of 4-year-olds, and virtually all 5-year-olds. To understand the popularity of these facilities, it is necessary to look at their recent history.

Prior to World War II, the ecoles maternelles had the character of day care facilities for children whose mothers had to work. For the most part the families were poor and accepted the programs because they had little choice, and the quality of care tended to be marginal. After World War II, the preschools became much more popular with middle-class families newly aware of the importance of the early childhood years and anxious to give their children an early educational boost. The French regular school system is strict and demanding, and parents concluded that the children must be better prepared if they were to do well in primary schools and subsequently to pursue the type of education which would ensure the "good life." The demand for preschools went up dramatically and they became overcrowded, but at the same time the higher expectations of middle-class families brought about changes for the better.

In addition, it gradually became known to educators that some 70 per cent of French children fail at least one of the first five grades, and 50 per cent more than one. Clearly something had to be done to change this situation, and one approach was a greater emphasis on school readiness and school-related skills at earlier ages.

The program which has emerged from this set of pressures does in fact tend to emphasize writing, reading, and arithmetic, especially at age 5, and to be rather school-like in atmosphere. In some ways it is a highly centralized program. The government pays the salaries of the teachers and enters into designing and financing buildings, training of teachers, etc. A heirarchy of supervision and direction under the Ministry of Education has been established. The government does not, however, provide a standard curriculum. It is up to the individual teachers, the directress of the school, and the regional inspectress, to work out suitable activities for the year. In such a system, a great deal depends upon the point of view and the leadership capabilities of the regional inspectress. Classrooms differ greatly, of course, even within a single district, but they also differ markedly from one district to another. Some inspectresses encourage activity, discovery, and positive attitudes toward learning; others are concerned primarily with school-related achievements.

The ecoles maternelles are basically educational (three hours of classes in the morning plus two hours in the afternoon), but most of them also serve the function of day care centers. Before and after school and at midday break, children may be left in the care of charwomen, and can eat lunch and take naps at school. Classes are quite large, with average enrollments of approximately 41 children per teacher. (In contrast, regular elementary school classes average approximately 25 per teacher.) With such large groups, the discipline tends to be rather rigid and the children receive little individualized attention.

For children not yet eligible for the ecoles maternelles, creches are

provided to serve a small fraction of infants of working mothers. Children may actually remain in creche programs in small classes (15-20) until age three or four, with specialized teachers, but because the creches are relatively expensive, parents tend to enroll their children in the ecoles maternelles as soon as they are eligible. The creches are under the supervison of the Ministry of Health and tend to reflect this by emphasizing sanitation, physical care, and feeding of the young children. There have been recent efforts to liberalize creche programs, to encourage more activity in the children and to enrole child care workers to see themselves as teachers rather than nurses, but progress has been slow and uneven. Still, there is great demand among young mothers with first infants; it is customary for a mother to stop work when her second child is born and to remain home at least until he enters the ecole maternelle.

Free, public preschool education, as a part of an extensive set of programs of support (medical services, family allowances, etc.), is a widespread phenomenon in France, and it is clear that preschools are popular with parents and children alike. They suffer, though, from overcrowding, pressures on the children for achievement, and from a lack of teachers' understanding of appropriate goals and methods of early education. There have been recent signs of improvement in child-teacher ratios, and in the development of more active learning situations.

D. Creches and Preschools: Goals

The increasing number of preschool programs in almost all nations is indicative of the importance attached to them by citizens, professionals, planners, and politicians. In many countries, there are lively controversies over a variety of questions related to creches and preschools. In each instance, the priorities accorded these institutions, and the discussions which continue to surround them, reflect the goals which group care and education are expected to accomplish. Let us pause to consider what some of these goals really are; some may be a little disconcerting.

1. Goals for Adults

As we have already mentioned, the need for or desire of mothers to work, and conversely the need of the society to have them work, have always been major reasons for establishing all-day, out-of-home group care for children. These needs continue to be among the most important energizers of the demand for expanded preschools. In almost every country, the percentage of working mothers of preschool children is growing steadily. More than 80 per cent of mothers in the U.S.S.R. and Hungary are working, for example; 53 per cent in Sweden; and 40 per cent in Great Britain.

In answering the needs of mothers and/or the economic demands of the state, it sometimes happens that very good day care is developed. At other times, it is purely custodial in quality and probably not in the best interests of the children. Many children grow overtired during long and possibly overstimulating days in the constant company of many other children. It is easy for the needs of the child to be lost sight of in pursuit of goals originating with the adults of the society. Alternative plans, such as

increasing the quantity and quality of family day care and increasing the number of part-time jobs available for parents of young children, are often ignored; expanded group day care has often become the sole answer. One should note the fact that group care is not always the best solution for the mother or the society, particularly when the child is excluded whenever he is mildly ill or when the facilities are inconvenient and/or expensive.

2. Developmental Goals for the Child

A distinction is sometimes drawn between early childhood development and early childhood education, the latter concentrating on the young child's ability to learn rapidly and the former on a broader conception of the child's needs, often taken in the context of his family and his community (cf., Mitchell, McHale & Datta, 1972). With very few exceptions, the programs being undertaken today could all be described as more-or-less developmental in intent, even more certainly so if one defines education as slanted toward cognitive learning as opposed to social/emotional growth. Even in highly cognitive programs such as those found in many French pre-schools, or in the compensatory education programs of Smilansky in Israel, the assumption is that positive social/emotional development (e.g. feelings of self-worth) will proceed naturally from the child's successes, his mastery over his environment, and his being on an intellectual par with his classmates.

a. Physical development.

The original asylums were aimed at the children's simple survival, endangered as they were by a lack of supervision and by the poor hygienic and nutritional conditions in which their families were living. This is rarely a salient goal now in most developed countries, but in developing nations preschool programs sometimes serve as a potent vehicles for survival. In India, for example, health education for parents, the direct nutritional supplements, and the medical care associated with the balwadi program are essential elements aimed at reducing mortality of infants and young children, and at reaching mothers in time to enable them to plan subsequent children and to receive adequate health care.

Good physical care, enhancement of growth and vitality are, however, a part of almost every program, so basically a part that they are sometimes lost sight of. In most programs, children receive nutritious snacks and/or meals, health care, immunizations, a chance for regular naps, physical exercise, etc. In fact, in most developed countries, health care is a basic part of preschool programs and frequently routine preventive care, which other children are given in separate clinics, is administered within the preschool.

Physical fitness is a goal in every country, but in some it receives much more direct attention than in others. In the Soviet Union, for example, there is regular training in gymnastics and there are elaborate programs for producing "hardening" to cold temperatures. In other countries, such as Sweden, tempting equipment is relied upon to entice the child to use his muscles spontaneously and joyfully. Outdoor play is felt everywhere to be

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important, though in some countries there is more protectiveness than in others from cold, rain, and heat.

b. Educational goals.

The educational goals of preschool programs can be arranged along a continuum of typical progression, from a hope to entertain children by giving them a good time, to emphasis on personality and social development, to a series of specific cognitive goals. These broad classes of goals are seldom in conflict; they are included more or less in all of the preschool programs in the developed countries. When one observes preschools around the world, it is, in fact, the similarities which are more striking than the differences. Yet, differences do exist which are related--though incompletely--to the goals of the programs.

(1) Recreational goals. Keeping children busy and happy seems to be the primary goal of those programs which are manned largely by untrained workers, such as the play groups in England. This goal has always been an important reason for parents sending their children to nursery groups, cooperatives, and informal neighborhood play groups. "A happy child is a good child," expresses the common human desire to see children merry and content. In some countries, the recreational park programs are not considered educational; in others, they are. Apparently some still believe that "work" (e.g learning) should not masquerade as "play."

(2) Emotional and personality growth. Teachers who seek to facilitate personality and social development tend to stress recognition of the child's need to develop as a person who is self-reliant, self-aware, individualistic yet cooperative, able to conform to the rules of group living, able to give and take in the physically and verbally aggressive world of the young, and able to express himself freely and genuinely in a socially acceptable way.* Goals for children are expressed in different terms in different countries, but even the most overcrowded systems emphasize the need for the teacher to react to each child as a person rather than a cipher. The magnitide of this is apparent when one considers that many teachers (e.g., in Belgium, France, and the Netherlands) still have more than 40 children to cope with--in times past these figures reached more than 100!

This concern with personality development has its pitfalls. With some exceptions, neither parents nor preschool educators know what sorts of children they want. Furthermore, they are not sure how to proceed to enhance personality development, or what the indirect consequences of their interventions might mean. Finally, the problems of measuring and evaluating personality development have thus far been almost insurmountable. Nowhere have psychologists succeeded in developing useful means of assessment in this troublesome area; indeed, today, few are trying to do so.

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*Note that in our own Project Head Start, "positive self image" is a primary goal of most programs (Bates, 1972).

(3) Character development. Closely related to personality development, but unique in its own right, is the explicit goal of character development to be found in some countries, particularly those with socialist governments. There, in fact, preschool is seen as a most important vehicle for molding the citizen of tomorrow. The Hungarian preschool, for example, by law aims to lay the foundation for the education of healthy men with plenty of stamina, men who love their country, who are self-respecting, courageous, disciplined, and culturally well-rounded. In such countries, the child's learning to be a member of the collective is a major goal, and by this is meant far more than learning to get along in the group. He is expected to be a cooperative person who works well as a member of a team, who seeks approbation not for himself but for the group, who is helpful when another child needs help, supportive when another has done something good (or bad), and so on. This goal, in fact, is a major raison d'etre for preschools in socialist countries seeking rapid changes in the "nature of man." Preschool education is seen as the essential instruments for improving and ensuring the future of the nation.

In many socialist countries, the concept of the children's group is given prominence and encouragement. By contrast, individualism is a dominant theme in the U.S.A.* (as well as in Great Britain, Sweden, and Switzerland), where a preschool class is actually conceived of as a collection or individual children relating more or less directly to the teacher and more casually to one another. In the former, there is the notion that each child must be taught increasingly to relate to others and to see himself as a member of a group. Moral development takes on a central, rather than a peripheral place, in preschool education, and furthermore, rather high standards of moral behavior, perseverance, industry, self-control, and resistance to temptation may be expected, verbalized, and reiterated by the children.

All this is not to say that in non-socialist countries no attention is paid to the development of children's cooperation with others, their roles as leaders and followers, etc. It is in the explicitness rather than the content of the goals, in the designing of preschool activities specifically to reach toward these consensual goals, that the crucial differences are found.

(4) Broad-ranging cognitive goals. Cognitive goals for preschool programs come in many varieties. There are, though, two major orientations, the general "enrichment" approaches on the one hand, and the more structured and goal-oriented approaches on the other.

The enrichment approach appears in two forms. One simply aspires to provide the opportunity for a broad range of experiences not ordinarily encountered in the home, so that the child may in his own way explore and come to terms with the world around him. There is something of Rousseau's doctrine in such programs. Emphasis is placed on "natural" environments (e.g. on space, flowers, animals, woods) especially for city children; on

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*Robinson, Robinson, Wolins, Bronfenbrenner, & Richmond, 1974.

playmates for the only child or rural, isolated child; on toys and books which the child is not likely to have at home; on spacious and aesthetically pleasing surroundings for children who live in overcrowded, run-down flats; and on such amusements as paints, clay, sand, music, and stories for children with busy and/or fastidious parents. Simply by giving the children a broad array of such enticing experiences, it is felt that they will seize the opportunity to grow, and that their mental picture of the world will be the richer for it. This goal has been given more emphasis in countries where childrens' environments tend to be restricted and homogeneous, but it is more-or-less explicit in all programs.

The second type of enrichment approach builds upon the first, expecting that as the child plays, he will encounter new problems and concepts, will discover relationships for himself, and at critical ("teachable") moments can be helped by the teacher. Such an approach is not a structured one; the teacher is a guide, an alert and clever resource, who with the right question or bit of explanation can give the child a boost. Spontaneous play naturally dominates such preschools, though the teacher may "program" the materials she makes available. Typically, goals are formulated in very general terms and are in keeping with a notion of individualism and independence on the part of the child. To be successful, such programs require relatively low pupil-to-teacher ratios and teachers who are alert, sensitive, and thoroughly professional.

The structured approach takes many forms ranging from brief, teacher-led activities for small groups, to pre-programmed activities for the better part of the day. In either event, most structured preschools, especially all-day programs, still use relaxed, free play resembling the enrichment approach for a good part of the time.

The methods of the structured approach are as varied as the countries in which they are found, the pedagogues who designed them, the supervisors and the teachers themselves. Often, the structure lies in the plan of the teacher, quite outside the awareness of the children. In any event, activities are designed to move children toward a behavioral goal which is more-or-less clearly specified. Some goals are, for example:

1. To listen and follow directions.
2. Development in communication (an almost universal goal).
3. Beginning academic skills or developing the readiness to begin the work of the regular school (e.g. number concepts, reading, writing).
4. To establish cause-effect reasoning, a "scientific" outlook, and discovery of basic principles and relationships.
5. To grasp some of the complex elements in the surroundings: family, community, country.
6. A knowledge of national heroes and a sense of allegiance to the country.
7. Music: the ability to sing on key and in time, to play simple instruments, to read music, to dance expressively.
8. Graphic arts: to portray what is seen accurately or, conversely, to paint freely, with or without a firm base in reality.

9. To develop gross motor coordination, sometimes in the form of gymnastic skills, sometimes simply in the form of competent play.
10. To develop eye-hand fine motor coordination (e.g., in plastic materials, creating objects, cutting, etc.).
11. To develop problem solving techniques (of increasing emphasis in countries aware of the speed-up in the production and use of knowledge and the hopelessness of trying to teach a sufficient fund of facts to equip the modern adult in a changing world).
12. To establish a degree of competence with the essential objects of human technology (particularly emphasized in developing countries) such as clocks, plumbing, simple machines, understanding of traffic patterns, etc.
13. Understanding and using self-care techniques (hygiene and cleanliness, nutrition, choosing clothing appropriate to the weather, etc.).

In most countries, parents tend to expect that preschools will go beyond the support of normal development to the achievement of goals like those just outlined. They hope that the child's cognitive development will be accelerated, that he will be precocious and skilled and will be better prepared to begin school than other children. Most educators profess not to favor cognitive acceleration, yet programs are evaluated by indices such as intelligence tests and subsequent school grades, and the results are considered satisfactory when the preschool group does better than the stay-at-home controls. Why this contradiction? One answer lies in the comparatively advanced development of standardized instruments to assess general intelligence and school achievements. Another lies in the growing elitism of those capable individuals in societies which permit more and more material reward and mobility according to talent and initiative. In most societies, it is increasingly the case that status cannot be inherited but must be earned directly. If parents cannot, by their achievements and accumulated wealth, confer a comfortable status on their children, the best they can do is to try to ensure that status by enhancing the child's capacity to do for himself. The dangers of excessive pressure are obvious; perhaps the situation is understandable, however, in terms of parents' desires for a good life for their children.

(5) Cultural transmission. In some countries preschool programs are specifically charged with passing on to children the cultural heritage of their nation and/or their own ethnic group. In several countries (e.g. U.S.S.R., Yugoslavia, Switzerland, and Belgium) more than one language is needed by the children, and preschool programs try both to introduce a second language and to strengthen the original one. In general, there are efforts to preserve the unique identity of the local and regional folklore, crafts, art, dance, song, history, etc. In the Soviet Union, for example, one may find quite young children learning astonishingly complicated traditional folk-dance steps and songs; in France, children hear the classic fables and folk tales; in Hungary, the music curricula developed by Kodaly are used widely and with impressive success in developing skills and maintaining the popular "addiction" to music; and so on. Emphasis on the seasons and holidays is

found everywhere; in Israel, it is used as a major vehicle for the acculturation of groups coming from Europe, North Africa, and North America. Much more than in the United States, most other countries utilize tales about national heroes to inspire the children and to help them to love and understand the origins of their country. Lenin's picture is found everywhere in the U.S.S.R., together with many story books about his childhood, his exploits during and after the Revolution, and his fondness for children. Beyond the patriotic elements, however, are everywhere found the color, the customs, the warmth, and the special flavor of the folk heritage of the nation or region (and sometimes of the religion and/or the ethnic minority). These cultural elements provide some of the most easily recognizable differences among the content of programs from one country to another.

(6) Compensatory goals. Much of the impetus for today's revolution in early education has originated from society's failures. Every country has its marginal members--though the proportion of these unfortunates differs from one place to another. The children of these families are the hard-to-reach, the vulnerable ones who often need special services for sustenance, health, social welfare, and education. Observing that the regular schools were not doing their job, that failure threatened many children who came from unpropitious homes while most children from "good" homes escaped this fate, a number of countries have undertaken special programs designed to enhance the development of preschool children from marginal groups.

In Israel and the United States there have been special efforts to design compensatory programs which would not only enrich the lives of the children and ensure them a broad range of experiences, but would also give them an extra boost to make up for perceived deficits in language, self-image, knowledge of technology, awareness of the cultural heritage, etc. The programs undertaken by the Smilanskys in Israel, for example, were relatively structured cognitive-oriented programs and emphasized such matters as celebration of the Jewish customs and holidays and the establishment of Hebrew as the common language. Although "compensatory" programs also exist in other countries they have sought merely to ensure that all the target children were in fact afforded a traditional preschool education, and there has been little effort to establish an appropriate special curriculum for them.

c. Auxiliary goals.

Finally, it should be recognized that preschools meet needs which are by design or by happenstance outside the realm of either baby-sitting or education. Tacked onto preschool programs are a number of other programs which in some settings are of great importance. In India, for example, the balwadi program probably has been of limited effectiveness as an educational enterprise. Yet, very important peripheral benefits reach children and families in the program: nutrition (feeding), health and nutrition education, training in child care for mothers, etc. Preschool programs have sometimes been used as a point of entry to families who might otherwise prove quite inaccessible. Project Head Start has served, as it was planned to do, not only to provide direct services to children, but as a rallying point for families to become aware of their interest; their dignity, and

and their political effectiveness; as a means of career development for parents; and as a vehicle of child care education. Medical services are given through programs in most countries; social agencies are alerted when parents seem to need special services. Because early education and day care are so ardently desired by so many parents, they may be receptive to the opportunities provided by the programs to improve skills in parenting and to further development as persons in their own right, in the best interests of the entire family.

d. Controversial Issues.

1. Opposition to the preschool

Despite all the arguments in favor of preschool programs, for the benefit of both parents and children, there are those who argue vehemently against such programs, even for the age group 3-6. Some arguments are directed at preschool experience in general, even on a part-time basis, while others are directed at preschools which render full-day care.

Opposition to part-time preschools is rather rare, especially where such programs have a relaxed tempo. Yet, there are those who feel that if the child's circumstances are not exceptionally deficient, he is better off at home with his mother and his playmates. Most such objectors seem to be thinking primarily of middle-class children whose homes are fairly spacious, who have plenty of friends and toys, and who, by visiting one another, essentially set up their own "play-schools" under the casual supervision of the mothers. There are others who object to what they regard as the unnecessary expense of preschools (per hour of attendance, part-day schools are more expensive than full-day schools) for unproved gains. Finally, there are those who believe that the group setting is poorly suited to some needs of the young child, such as the needs for prompt reinforcement, for comforting and loving, and for flexible adjustments to his internal patterns of hunger, sleep, activity, and calm.

Opposition to full-day preschool programs is not at all rare, especially in those countries where work is not required or expected of mothers. Even with regard to well-staffed and stimulating preschools, there is in some the fear that children will grow away from their mothers (and vice versa), that mother-child relationships will be further disturbed by the presence of the teacher-child relationships (creating the potential for unhappy triangles), and that children will be required to try too hard to adjust to the institutions when normally their caretakers would adjust to them. Meals are served only at regular times; beds are made available only at one time when all other activity halts; teachers have room for only one child at a time on their laps and seldom have time to make a lap at all. There is also fear that the child will be over-stimulated, unable to "find himself" in his confusing and exciting environment, never learning how to play alone or to enjoy his own company. Other objections come from those who feel that the school child's lot and that of the adult are hard indeed, and that childhood is a time to play as much as possible unrestricted by society's demands.

Finally, of course, there are many mothers who enjoy the traditional role and who would feel a sense of loss if they were away from their little children. They resent the implication that they should work away from home for other than economic reasons, that someone else is better prepared to care for and to educate their child. Not all women wish to be "liberated" from motherhood. Such feelings are apparently especially prevalent in Switzerland, where the family reigns supreme, but they are echoed in groups in every country.

2. Controversy about the Creche

Even in countries with high proportions of older children (3 to 7 years old) attending preschools, relatively few younger children (0-3 years old) tend to be accommodated in creches. The world-wide trend is clearly that, even among those nations which earlier had planned extensive creche programs, group care for infants has been far outdistanced by preschools. In few localities is the number of spaces in creches actually falling off, but relatively few new ones are being opened.* This trend to de-emphasize creche care is one of the most consistent and dramatic developments in the care of young children; it seems to be happening in a very broad range of countries, with greatly differing philosophies of child care.

In general, this trend is a relatively recent development. As has been indicated, the reasons behind the establishment of child-caring institutions have, until recently, had much more to do with the needs of society and of the mothers than of the children. Distinctions were rarely drawn between adults according to the age of their children. Now there are, however, such developments as the special allowances given to mothers in Hungary and other countries if they elect to remain at home to care for their babies under the age of 3 years.

Why this opposition to creches--mainly among professionals and planners, rather than among parents--which has no strongly reversed the trend toward expanded services?

First, care of infants and toddlers is expensive, much more expensive than care of older children. It is estimated that adequate day care of infants in a group setting in the U.S.A. costs approximately $3,600 per year for each child, but that adequate day care for older children can be obtained for about half that amount. Even inadequate infant care is expensive. Infants must be fed, changed, bathed, moved about, handed toys, talked to, etc.--they are completely dependent and require constant supervision. The ratio of staff to children to meet even minimal standards must be considerably higher than for older children. In the Soviet Union, with relatively low nurse:child ratios (one nurse and one helper for 15 infants), manpower costs are by far the highest items in the budget. In the Methodological Home in Budapest, a residential institution for infants and toddlers which stresses the development of independent action, a daytime ratio of 2 nurses to 9 infants is maintained (3 live-in nurses on a rotating schedule

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*The major exception at the moment may be France, in which both left and right political factions in the last election promised expansion of the creche system to accommodate the needs of more working mothers.

provide complete staffing night and day for 9 infants).

Second, it is not clear that educational activities for very young infants in a typical group setting have much effect before age 18 months. The age when children begin to learn more rapidly in a group situation is typically stated to be at 2½ to 3 by most professional supervisory and teaching personnel, even in those countries which advocate group care in order to promote a sense of "collectivity." Especially if the child's home or substitute home meets his physical needs, and if his caretakers are attentive and kindly (not necessarily expert), it is apparently widely felt that creches have little of positive value to offer. (There are, it should be pointed out, some experts who disagree, but they tend to be in the distinct minority.)

Third, some theoreticians and practitioners are convinced that it is especially important for the baby to establish a firm relationship with the mother early in life, especially during the second half of his first year and the beginning of his second year. They believe that the intrusion of other major caretakers disturbs this essential dyad, with possible unfortunate consequences for the child's ultimate sense of identity and his ability to relate to others. This point of view especially characterizes theoreticians of a psychoanalytic bent and is therefore rather commonly to be heard in France and Switzerland, among others.

Many experts seem to doubt that group care is capable of meeting the baby's needs, both because of the ineffective ways he has to communicate with people who may not be sensitive and continuously attentive to him, and because external conditions often conflict with his internal and compelling rhythms. The baby who is ready for sleep may be kept awake by the movement and noise about him; the baby who is irritable because of an erupting tooth may not receive the attention needed because the busy nurses do not have the time. Space in infant nurseries is often restricted, and the necesssary hygienic efforts tend to create environments which are psychologically as well as physically sterile. The long day is also felt to be overstimulating and overly tiring for many infants.

Fifth, many professionals are concerned about the transient illnesses which so many infants contract when they are exposed to a group. Frequently, they contract more than one disease at a time. Whether these illnesses, if not too serious, are actually harmful to long-term development has not been tested, and in fact there is surprisingly little research being conducted in this area. Even so, almost nowhere are ill children permitted in group care, nor is the question even being considered.

Finally, many people object on what are probably erroneous grounds: i.e., the evidence from residential nurseries of the past. Several classic studies of children have suggested that, with insufficient staff and stimulation, children can be retarded in all aspects of development, from motor skills to communication skills, and that furthermore they may be depressed, apathetic, and vulnerable to death from ordinary childhood illnesses. This is not the place to argue these conclusions, but clearly the interpretation that the child's own mother must be the exclusive caretaker cannot legitimately be based on such data. There are major differences between such residential homes and today's typical day care centers, the latter being much more stimulating and better staffed; there are

fundamental differences between day-time care for several hours on five days a week, and total withdrawal from a family setting.

There are a number of parents and professionals (not usually planners, who tend to be horrified by the expenses involved) who maintain that the trouble with the creches is in the way they are presently staffed and run, not in their potential value. They maintain that, with sufficient well-trained staff, a cleverly designed educational program, and ample space and equipment, creches could introduce a much broader and more favorable perspective into the life of the infant and toddler than can his home. They also maintain that, to ask a competent mother to interrupt her career for several years--sometimes tantamount to giving it up permanently--does a disservice to the whole family, including the child. Furthermore, for the overburdened, poorly educated and/or indifferent mother, a good creche may far exceed the quality of the care given at home. (In France, a vociferous group demands immediate expansion of creches on these grounds, despite their limited quality, on the assumption that improvements can later be demanded.)

At the moment, even though few creches are being closed and in fact new ones are being opened in many countries, there is a definite reluctance to expand group facilities for babies and toddlers. The "nays" would seem to have it, at least for the present, though the pressure of demands for infant care are impossible to ignore. In response to this conflictful situation, a number of alternatives are being tried.

First, for example, there are efforts to improve the quality of mothering in the child's own home. In the United States and in Israel there are experimental educational programs being carried into the homes of poverty families, in order to enhance the mothers' skills at parenting. The same kind of effort, although concentrated on the physical aspects of care, is represented in several countries (e.g., U.S.S.R., Great Britain, Israel, Hungary, and France) where there are programs of home visits by local district nurses as a matter of general practice.

Second, there is more effort being made to encourage day care in family settings, by increasing the personnel who can inspect and license such homes. Many of the objections raised against group care for infants can be met in a well-run family setting, even if it is not the child's own home.

Third, there are a variety of deliberate efforts to encourage the mother to remain at home with her child for a protracted period. In Hungary, for example, an allowance is given to a mother who stays home for up to three years after the birth of her child, with her reemployment guaranteed. (This possibility is more attractive to lower-paid non-professional mothers, but even many well educated mothers stay home longer than they might have otherwise.) Similarly, France offers payments to mothers of young children to entice them to remain at home. (Parenthetically, we should note that American policy on such matters has shown considerable vacillation, especially as regards AFDC mothers.)

Fourth, a solution especially attractive to the woman who enjoys working and/or finds the all-day care of her child burdensome, isolating or boring, is the provision of more part-time jobs for women (and for men as well). In Sweden,

whether by design or by happenstance, most working mothers of preschool children are employed only part-time. The same is true for mothers of children under 3 in the United States. For the mother who does not need a full-time salary to survive, such a compromise solution can prove stimulating and satisfying both to her and to her infant.

e. Family Day Care

The daytime care of young children in family settings is still an important means of child care in most countries. In return for financial reimbursement, day care is rendered to a child in a flat or house belonging to another family, usually in the company of a few other young children, generally including at least one child belonging to the woman rendering the care. In countries where housing is not a problem, such arrangements are particularly frequent; they are less practical where housing is cramped and/or where most women work outside the home.

There is little research data concerning family day care. First, of course, this is because it is usually a private affair between parents and caretaker, without formal contracts, and without institutional supports. Although most countries have laws regulating the taking in of children (having to do with numbers of children, health of caretaker, space, etc.), it takes a great deal of effort to discover where such day care is going on and to provide any kind of continuing inspection or licensure. Furthermore, many women resent the intrusion of inspectors in their own homes. Perhaps more potent is the fact that this kind of income is easy to hide from the tax collector!

Even in a country such as Great Britain which makes an energetic effort to license family day care homes, at least half the "child minders" are unknown to the authorities and those who are known cannot be visited very frequently. France, too, has laws requiring the parents to report such placements immediately, but again, the percentage escaping scrutiny is high.

Even so, family day care provides certain advantages over group day care which make it attractive to at least some families.

1. Such arrangements are fundamentally less expensive, on the whole, because no additional space is needed, no extra utilities, and the caretaker's own child(ren) do not require out-of-home care. (Supervision costs, however, may be high)

2. They can more readily accommodate to the minor illnesses of children, reducing the number of days the mother must be absent from work.

3. They are flexible in hours, easily adapted to part-time working schedules, changing shifts, vacations, etc. The supply of homes can also be responsive to overall changes in the demand, offering temporary care during busy seasons, etc.

4. They are usually close to the children's homes, so that a minimum of transportation time is needed, and the children can continue their own neighborhood friendships.

5. They can offer a greater degree of individual attention and flexibility in meals, naps, etc.

6. Sibling groups can be kept together.

7. Older children can often return to these familiar settings for after-school care.

8. For children subject to overstimulation in large groups, or children vulnerable to infections, such arrangements may provide the only feasible out-of-home care. For these reasons, they are often more appropriate for infants and toddlers. This perhaps is the most important argument for the establishment of good in-home settings for day care. For children who are not particularly robust, for nervous children, even for many active and alert children, a home-like environment with a single adult and a small group of children to whom to relate may be much less taxing than a group setting.

9. One should not lose sight of the fact that many women enjoy taking care of young children, including their own! Some women with older children suddenly find their houses empty and have no outlet for their mothering skills, unless they use them with other people's children.

On the other hand, family day care has some disadvantages, too, though most of these can potentially be overcome.

1. As we have seen, identification and supervision of family day care houses is problematic and expensive.

2. There are currently few provisions for subsidizing family day care; thus, when subsidized group care is available it is usually less expensive for the low-income family.

3. The qualifications of the family day care mothers are usually low. They have seldom had any special training for the work, and with few exceptions (e.g., some new and very limited programs in Sweden and the U.S.) there are no means for such mothers to obtain appropriate training. In fact, the day care mother in some instances may be the <u>least</u> competent person in her neighborhood and the least suited to be the children's caretaker because she is uneducated, slovenly, irresponsible, or depressed. In part because of this situation, pay is usually extremely low--disgracefully low.

4. Because of the potentially highly charged relationship between mother and caretaker, it is easy for misunderstandings to arise. One may feel the other does too little for the child; competitions and jealousies may grow; means and standards of discipline may be contradictory, etc. One U.S. study (Prescott, 1965) found that, of all child care arrangements, paid family day care was most subject to maternal dissatisfaction, because of such complaints.

5. Similarly, the financial dealings between the two parties may be conflictful if the mother is unable to make payments regularly, is late to pick up the child, etc. Sweden has instituted a municipal program in which financial problems are circumvented entirely; family day care mothers are paid a salary by

the agency, and in turn the parents pay the agency without any exchange of money between parent and day care worker. Such an arrangement also introduces an effective mechanism for providing subsidies for low-income families.

6. The day care home is unlikely to have as broad a variety of play equipment and materials as is the preschool setting. This is a practical matter, easily solved by revolving sets of materials and/or by special grants. In many countries, however, adequate space is the most important basic problem, and this is difficult to solve unless caretakers' families should be made eligible for larger accommodations. Overcrowded housing has many unexpected but pervasive ramifications such as discouraging families from having (additional) children, the preclusion of adoption or foster family care as a solution for the child needing a substitute family, the need for spacious public playgrounds to compensate for lack of space in the home, the overexposure of young children to television and adult activities, etc.

f. Organization of Group Centers

A major portion of societies' organized efforts to provide nurturance for young children has taken the form of group care. Some of these efforts are of grand proportions. Nursery-kindergartens in the U.S.S.R., for example, involve over 12 million children in full-day care, nearly three times the number of American children in any preschool or day care program. An examination of the alternate ways of organizing group care reveals, though, striking variations in such dimensions as the degree of centralization, patterns of staffing, financing, grouping children, etc. In this section we will take a look at some of the most important administrative features in developing patterns of organization.

1. Centralization vs. Decentralization

Looking, as it were, "from the top," one is struck by the variety of ways in which governments have varied the degree of centralized control over their preschool institutions. It is sometimes quite difficult to characterize a country's programs as "centralized" or "decentralized," though there are clear-cut examples of programs at each extreme of the continuum.

Most of the socialist countries have instituted a high degree of centralized planning and administration. Cuba has perhaps the most centralized programs, with financing, staffing, curricula, etc., all emanating from a central source. Visiting different schools during the same week, one finds exactly the same lesson plans everywhere, the same projects, materials, and the same equipment, meals, etc. There is also a high degree of centralization in the Soviet Union, although each of the 15 Republics has its own slight variations on the centrally proposed curricula, and ethnic differences among the population are respected and preserved. At the opposite end of the distribution are the nursery schools in such countries as the United States, Switzerland, and England, although each of these countries also has parts of its preschool system which have some centrally organized features. In between these extremes, we find a heterogeneous pattern which generally reflects something about the way the society is organized in general, as well as the way it approaches its other programs for children.

It has generally been held that financial control determines control of other matters as well, but in fact a number of preschool systems demonstrate that this need not be the case. In the United States, for example, Project Head Start is almost totally federally funded (the 20% local share is usually made in non-monetary forms such as volunteer service) and yet, aside from meeting certain minimal standards, local communities have complete control over personnel, curriculum, setting, length of day, etc. In Sweden, nursery schools are municipally constructed and funded according to federal guidelines, with the classroom teacher rather autonomous; on the other hand, the day nurseries usually have both federal and municipal funding but the same kind of local control remains. In France, there is substantial federal control and a carefully arranged heirarchy of supervision of the local ecoles maternelles. However, enough power is retained at the lower levels of the system to assure that the district inspectress can, within limits, have her preschools run much the way she sees fit, especially with respect to such matters as curriculum, teaching style and admission of children. No centrally devised curriculum exists in the French preschools, although there are general guidelines.

Centralization is, then, certainly not an all-or-none affair, and countries have managed to work out many patterns, each of which tends to be in line with the ways it usually organizes its institutions. Yet, there appear to be certain outcomes which are more or less likely depending upon the degree of centralization which develops.

Centralization can offer some advantages which are less readily attainable with a decentralized system. For example:

(a) Under those conditions where there is the conviction that a new system must be built rapidly and yet there is an absence of trained personnel, centralized directives as to construction, operations, curriculum, etc., can circumvent the necessity "to invent the wheel" in each locality. This is particularly true where the general educational level is low. Thus, it is not happenstance that Cuba, giving an extremely high priority to early education but in the absence of a cadre of trained personnel (and even, in the beginning, with a high adult illiteracy rate), developed a program under comprehensive and detailed central control. The United States, in launching Project Head Start with a lack of trained personnel almost as acute but with a higher general level of education in the population and a somewhat greater reservoir of expertise, furnished federal funding but left the development of the programs for the most part within the local communities. It is, however, important to note that the serious goals for Head Start included just the sort of community activity which as a consequence centered around the local development of the preschool programs.

(b) Centralization of research enables the best available minds to be turned to systematic inquiries concerning many aspects of the preschool. In the U.S.S.R., the Institute for the Study of the Preschool Child (now called the the Institute for Preschool Education) and analogous institutes in the Republics, have a regularized relationship with their ministries of education. This ensures an orderly and continuous re-examination of the procedures recommended for the nursery-kindergartens. This centralization avoids duplication of effort and can minimize concentration on one popular area or another to

the exclusion of other pressing questions.

(c) Similarly, transmission of research findings and other information can be rapidly carried out in a centralized system with its chains of communication and of command.

(d) In the more centralized systems, careful planning is an absolute necessity, since even minor simultaneous changes happening in the same direction throughout a system tend to have major effects. For example, a directive to add one special art teacher, or even one extra kitchen worker, for every 300 children in preschools in the Soviet Union would require 40,000 additional personnel! The elevation of the planning function has certain obvious advantages, such as the possibility of a rational weighing of priorities, the provision of suitable training facilities for personnel, etc.

(e) Another potential effect of centralization is the coordination of various services for the same children and their families, and therefore a mutual enhancement of all such efforts. One prominent example is the inclusion of well-child care in the programs of preschools, a widespread practice throughout the world, which ensures both that health services are delivered to the children and that they are able to maximally benefit from the preschool program.

(f) Centralized control can also serve to provide more-or-less equal quality of services throughout the country, making up for the lacks of more impoverished areas unable to pay their full share. Compared with a system of local control and financing this tends, of course, to bring a relative advantage to the poorer sections which are less able to pay for their preschools but ordinarily have a greater share of working mothers than do sections which are more well-to-do.

(g) When personnel in large numbers are involved, as in a centralized system, personnel practices are more likely to be worked out on the basis of principles of modern management and collective bargaining. Particularly in the area of child care and preschools, where throughout the world salaries tend to be low and the physical and emotional demands of the job very high, this is a point of particular significance.

Yet, of course, centralized systems pay a price as well.

(a) The most obvious and inevitable of these is the growth of the bureaucratic structures necessary to develop and to administer a centralized system. Bureaucracies, despite the opportunity for expertise which they offer, have an unfortunate habit of growing far beyond rational bounds, rigidifying, building on themselves and removing many talented personnel from the actual arena of child contact. Once established, the inertia of a bureaucracy is difficult to escape.

(b) While there are potential advantages which may accrue through the speedy transmission of research findings and administrative decrees, when mistakes are made they tend to be big ones, with a momentum difficult to halt. Most of the leading pedagogues in socialist countries, for example, now tend to consider that previous methods of preschool education concerned with life as a

member of a collective tended to encourage conformity to the exclusion of creativity. Revised curricula now reflect this change of opinion. This is not to suggest that more mistakes need be made when control is centralized (perhaps the opposite is true), but only that they tend to be magnified in terms of numbers of children and families affected.

(c) Centralized control tends to stifle local initiative. Talents of teachers, administrators, parents, and other community members are often not put to their most creative use. Many rather centralized systems do leave opportunities for local initiative; the British Infant Schools, for example, can be the sites of intense parent involvement, and much depends upon the ability, ingenuity, professional views, and temperament of headmasters and teachers alike. In the Soviet Union, local elementary or secondary schools, workers' unions, etc., may "adopt" a preschool or a class and make toys, arrange outings and projects of their own creation, although they do little to influence policy. Whether one views local initiative as a blessing or a drawback depends in part upon whether the preschools are conceived as insitutions for the children (in which case what matters most is the excellence of the program for the child) or for families (in which case the involvement of parents and the sense of community effort may be justified as ends in their own right), or both.

(d) The problems of adapting to local needs, ethnic tendencies, and so on, may be difficult to solve in a centralized system. Try to conceive, for example, of a single architecturally modern, aesthetically pleasing, efficient preschool which might be designed for all the conceivable climatic conditions in the rural and urban sections of any nation. Similarly, working arrangements differ. In some areas of the Soviet Union most of the manufacturing plants work a 5-day week, yet nationwide, preschool teachers are scheduled in double shifts for a six-day week with shorter hours. Inevitable conflicts arise on the weekends when parents want their children at home and thereby interrupt the preschool program.

Decentralized systems have their own advantages and problems, over and above those implied as the reverse of the matters mentioned above. Among the special advantages are the following:

(a) The consumer tends to determine directly the kinds of services and facilities which are offered. Assuming that families can afford to choose the alternative they want, that they are well informed about what to look for in "quality child care," and that they are able to judge the quality of care actually offered in private homes or group facilities, this system may come closest to responding to the needs of the individual children and their families by utilizing the day-to-day judgments of the adults who care most about the welfare and development of the children, and are most attuned to their behavior. Inferior and unwanted services tend to wither for lack of clientele; superior services and those which are most desired tend to flourish.

(b) Decentralized systems also tend to increase diversity in services, in order to match the desires of the consumers. Particularly in an area in which there is so much room for exploration and improvement, this diversity tends to spawn improvements, though initially these may be scattered and very small in scale. Maximum flexibility should occur within decentralized systems, as facilities and services change to meet the changes over time in consumer desires, goals for child care, number of working mothers and their daily schedules, etc.

Yet, these extremely important features of decentralization incure their own costs.

(a) In decentralized systems, the vigor and growth which accompany diversity may lead to such differences among the segments of the overall system that it is difficult to train personnel or to anticipate future manpower needs. Indeed, planning of any kind becomes very difficult.

(b) Unless some means is provided for rapid communication of new ideas, even the most convincing ones may take many years to make themselves felt throughout the entire system, just as changes in childrearing outlooks take a long time to spread. Yet, there is evidence that these time spans are narrowing in modern societies.

(c) Insufficient professional control may mean that some children are actually harmed by preschool programs ill-suited to the needs of children, or by teachers who should not be teaching. In other words, there are times when parental choice is not sufficiently well-informed to protect the interests of the children, where a bright, new facility blinds parents to deficiencies in personnel, and so on.

At this point, it seems distinctly unwise to recommend any one system over the other. It is important to note however, that according to recent trends, as preschools and day care centers are seen as essential to the well-being of young children and their families, central units of government have tended to assume responsibility previously borne by provinces, local communities, and private citizens.

2. Public vs. Private Facilities

Services which are seen as rights of citizens rather than privileges, soon come to be taken over by governmental authority. Payments by parents tend to be reduced or eliminated. Most of the developed countries now provide free education for older children for at least 10 years; many also have free university tuition and some, especially the socialist countries, also provide living support at that level. Preschool education is provided free of charge in some countries and many others are trying to reduce and/or to eliminate charges.

Private preschools are to be found only in capitalist countries, of course, and usually they exist side by side with public facilities. Of our sample of countries, it is mainly in the United States, Switzerland, and England that private facilities predominate at the younger age levels, and even in these nations, public facilities are common (compulsory in England and French-speaking Switzerland) at age 5. Private facilities persist, even though there is little profit to be made in a well run preschool, except for the very few used by children of wealthy parents willing to pay exhorbitant tuition.

Their continued existence under such conditions suggests that some needs of children and/or parents may not be met by existing public preschools. In other words the use of private facilities serves as a weathervane of parents' perceptions about the public services. In some areas public facilities are simply unavailable or the waiting lists are long. In others (e.g., France), parents may be searching for smaller classes, different hours of operation, greater

flexibility, religious training, special curricula, etc.

3. Coverage by Age

Table 2 presents the most recent statistics on the percentages of young children enrolled in group programs (public and private combined) in the countries studied. Included are both full-day and part-day programs, but family day care is excluded.

TABLE 2

Estimated Coverage by Age in Group Programs

Country	Year of Report	Age of School Entry	Ages 2-5	
France	1973	6	72%	2 yr. 22% 3 yr. 72% 4 yr. 93% 5 yr. 100%
Great Britain	1972	5	37%	2 yr. 0.4% 3 yr. 6% 4 yr. 36%
Hungary	1971	6	59%	
Israel	1972	5		(0-4) 23% (0-5) 36%
Poland	1972	7		(0-2) 5% (2-6) 39%
Sweden	1971	7	10%	Under 2 3.0% 2 yr. 5.0% 3 yr. 6.1% 4 yr. 7.8% 5 yr. 19.8% 6 yr. 59.4%
U.S.	1971	6	37%	

The degree of variation in coverage is perhaps surprising in such a highly developed group of countries. We find very high percentages of coverage in France

and Hungary, for example, and extremely low percentages in Sweden. Unfortunately, comparable figures by each year of age were not made available in all the countries, so direct comparisons are in some cases difficult.

There are, of course, a number of variables which modify the picture considerably. The degree to which group solutions to child care are utilized is related to the percentage of parents working, the adequacy and spaciousness of housing, the usual family structure (e.g., the availability of grandmothers), the centralization of planning, etc. Yet these readily observable indices do not tell the entire story. Compare the broad coverage in France, for example, where the percentage of working mothers is not, relatively speaking, very high and where housing is not an acute problem with Sweden's much less extensive coverage, where more mothers work and housing is only recently easing up. Clearly, the Swedes have opted for very high quality programs, not to be compromised by demands for service; the same can be said for Great Britain. France, on the other hand, accepts children in very large classes, nearly twice the size found in French primary schools. In all countries, decisions tend to be vociferously debated, but the issues are far from simple. They reach deep into the political and social ethos, reflecting the goals of the preschool system as well as pervasive attitudes toward the nature and the importance of early childhood.

4. Size of Centers

In urban areas, where the number and size of centers can be readily controlled, questions arise as to the optimal size a center should be (In rural areas, the question is relatively academic and single classes usually predominate, often attached to the local primary school.) Table 3 roughly summarizes the information available about actual and optimal sizes of centers established in those countries which have made official determinations of this question. We can see that in most (e.g., France and the Soviet Union), there tend to be rather large centers (about 180 children), whereas in only a few (e.g., Sweden), much smaller centers are preferred. The average size of preschool centers is almost everywhere considerably higher than that recommended in the United States.

The reasons given for large centers generally have to do with economies of building (e.g., shared play space, special music rooms, kitchen facilities), of operations (e.g., efficient use of cleaning, cooking, and maintenance staff), and of the use of non-classroom professional staff (e.g., nurse, physician, specialized teachers). Larger centers are also more likely to be assigned a full-time (non-teaching) director who may also have administrative assistants, a chief pedagogue, and others under her command.

Smaller centers tend to be preferred for their intimacy, the presumed closer relationship with parents, and their convenience to the children's homes. To our knowledge, the single empirical study of this variable is American. Prescott (1970) studied 50 American day-care centers, public and private. She found that the smaller programs, serving 30-60 children, tended to be of higher quality than those serving over 60 children, where there was much more emphasis on rules and restrictions. "In smaller centers...provision of opportunities for pleasure, wonder, and delight was significantly higher," despite the fact that the larger centers had better trained teachers and more space per child. It is especially interesting that in none of the countries we studied did we find

TABLE 3

Size of Centers

Country	Recommended number of Pupils (urban)	Recommended number of classes
France	150-320	4-8
Hungary	120	4
Israel	50-100	
Poland	30-120 (average = 56)	1-4
Sweden	25	1
U.S.S.R.	180	8-10
Yogoslavia	100-120 (maximum 160)	4-5

comparable investigations, and yet size of center is a matter of firm policy in several of them, largely determined by planners without the aid of professional advice.

5. Composition of Children's Groups

By far the most common pattern is to group children according to age, and to draw them from the immediate neighborhood. Yet there are numerous possible variations.

a. Neighborhood centers versus parents' places of employment. In a number of countries (e.g., Hungary, Poland, Sweden, U.S.S.R.), preschool centers have been established by manufacturing plants, unions, etc., on or near the premises of the parents' employment. These have represented an attempt to ensure that workers' children would be well taken care of, and have often been seen as a contribution of management and/or labor in the public welfare. It was expected that parents would drop in to see their children frequently during the day, but almost invariably this has proved not to be the case. There is now general agreement that it is better for babies and young children to remain near home in order to escape fatiguing travel and exposure to contagious disease on public transportation. Although some such centers still exist in almost every country, they have dropped considerably in popularity except for some which are designed especially for the children of university students.

b. Socioeconomic factors. Neighborhood day care centers reflect their surroundings and in most cases this results in marked segregation by ethnic group, social class, etc. This is an item of particular concern in compensatory programs

specifically designed for poor children or unassimilated ethnic groups. Even when preschool group composition is deliberately mixed, however, special efforts are probably needed to give children a common experiential background on which to build their relationships.

c. Handicapped children. Another form of segregation has to do with the placement of handicapped children. Among our sample of countries, only Sweden has deliberately decided to include handicapped children in ordinary preschools, and even this decision was rather recent. In the Soviet Union special preschools are provided within districts for children with all manner of handicaps. Through its privately sponsored charities, Israel also seeks to provide special preschools for some handicapped children, especially those with hearing loss. France, surprisingly, lags rather far behind in this respect, often excluding even mildly handicapped children from ecoles maternelles without substitute experience, though special classes are numerous in regular school.

d. Separation vs integration of facilities. The most common division among day care facilities is drawn on the basis of age, with creches housed separately and administered independently of preschools. In almost every country (France, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, etc.) this separation exists, although sometimes they are under the same ministerial jurisdiction. In Great Britain and the United States, there are very few creches to be found, so the question rarely arises. Most frequently, the control of the creches is under the Ministry of Health and the staffs are teachers. It is also a fact of life that most Ministries of Health command more generous funding and can sustain higher per/child costs.

The Soviet Union has, fairly recently, reorganized its system so as to integrate care programs into "nursery-kindergartens." The reasons for this change are significant, because they are echoed throughout the world. The primary argument was that when creches are special facilities, the staffs tend to emphasize the physical care of infants and toddlers to the exclusion of teaching. No one denies the importance of physical care to the very young, but the new recognition of the potential of the infant and toddler for learning, exploration, curiosity, and independence suggests that traditional nursing is not enough. The Soviet Union has, also, gone farther than other nations in devising special curricula for babies, suitable games, songs, etc., which form systematic teaching programs. Elsewhere (e.g., Hungary, Poland and France), there has been a special effort to reorient the thinking of the nursing staffs along educational lines.

A further advantage of the integration of the creches with the preschools is that parents with children in both age ranges can be served by the same facility, the same medical staff, etc. For the harried family who must get children ready in the early hours of the morning, this convenience is very welcome, and probably leads in addition to a richer and more effective relationship between staff and parents.

Another possible combination is the inclusion of the preschool as a part of the regular school system. This is an uncommon practice, even where the two are under the same ministry, except in rural areas and for those classes

expressly designed to be transitional (e.g., British infant schools, Hungarian compensatory program, Israeli and Swiss (French language) kindergartens). Underlining the conviction that preschool is fundamentally different from "school," the union of these facilities is often prohibited by law. The current worldwide drop in the birthrate, simultaneous with expansion of preschools, may lead in a few years to pressure on primary schools to relinquish spare classrooms for younger children.

Why is there such strong insistence on separation? There are, of course, a number of practical reasons such as the greater play space and sleeping space needed by preschoolers, but these are matters which appear potentially solvable. The greater strength of this division seems to lie in the prevailing animosity which is so often found between the preschool educator and the educator of older children. The complaint is frequently voiced by preschool teachers that little children's joi de vivre, curiosity, creativity, even physical grace of movement, are all stifled and buried once they enter school. School teachers as often decry the restlessness and "uninhibited" behavior of their young pupils used to a more active environment in the preschools. Whether or not the complaints are justified, the animosity is close to being universal. In our study, the principal exception is the acceptance of the British infant schools by the preschool teachers, but there it seems that a similar complaint is voiced by infant-school teachers about the junior schools the children enter at age 7! In the Soviet Union, there has been a friendly scientific rivalry, a contest, between the kindergartens and the regular schools to determine who can do a better job with six year olds, apparently decided in 1973 in favor of continuing the placement of six year olds in the kindergartens but strengthening academic preparation for school.

It is also in the Soviet Union that one sees the most deliberate attempts to help the children bridge the gulf between preschool and school. Often elementary classes "adopt" a preschool class, bring them to the school, play games, etc. The preschool class may be taken on walks past and into the elementary school many times during the final preschool year, sometimes staying for lunch. Teachers may also visit the preschool, and each child's record goes with him to his new school.

In most places, though, this transition brings up strong feelings on the part of adults and children alike. It is a curious phenomenon, one which strongly suggests the difficulties of working out continuity in the education of children, protecting and nourishing the best qualities each stage has to offer.

e. Horizontal versus vertical (or sibling) grouping. There are very few exceptions to the practice of dividing preschool children strictly by age. "Everyone" accepts it as the most natural arrangement; but few ask why it seems so natural and whether it is in fact best, or perhaps best for the entire day.*

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*When this question was posed to a group of French nurses, their immediate response was that it would be too difficult to manage a correct diet for mixed age groups--this is a land where cuisine is of utmost importance and eating is a very serious affair.)

In some ways of course, it is easier to devise games, lessons, and schedules which fit most children in a narrow age range, than to deal with a broader range of needs. It is easier to keep the toddler out of the paints being used by the 5-year-old if they are in different rooms. There is a certain neatness to organizing children by age for naps; when conflicts occur, the partners tend to be equally matched; and so on.

In Yugoslavia, some kindergartens are divided into only two levels: 3- and 4-year-olds, versus 5- and 6-year-olds. In England, also, some mixed age groups have been tried, and the infant schools usually group together children ages 5 to 7. The most radical proposal at the moment, however, is the set of recommendations made by the latest commission on preschool education in Sweden. It proposes a "sibling group" of children ages 2½ to 7, 18-20 children with four teachers. Looked at from the familial point of view this is, of course, the mixed-age group which seems most "natural." Experience in age-mixed day care centers in the United States suggests that varying the composition of groups during the day also seems "natural," similar to the situation of a child who spends part of the day with his own siblings and another part in a preschool with children of his own age. There are potential advantages to the vertical grouping system which have apparently gone unnoticed. Younger children can be stimulated by older ones, particularly in language development. Young children with older siblings are often seen engaged in play which appears "beyond their years." The older ones have something to gain as well from the presence of younger children with whom they can play more mature roles--teacher, nurturer, leader. Real siblings can also remain together and the relationship of their parents to a single set of caretakers can be intensified, especially if the children remain with the same staff members until they "graduate" from the facility.

H. Staff

The staff is by far the most important part of the entire preschool system. The quality of the child's experience consists of his interactions with other human beings, and those interactions with the inanimate environment which the adults make possible for him. The best curriculum, the most spacious and attractive building, the cleverest toys and games--none of these are worth a whit compared to a talented, well-trained teacher. Moreover, staff salaries constitute the largest item in almost all preschools.

1. Adults and Children

Not just the teachers, but all supporting staff must be taken into account. Consider, for example, the staff of an ordinary Polish preschool, serving four age groups (30 children each), a total of approximately 120 children. It may be found that there are more adults involved than expected. There are, on the average,

1 directress
8 teachers (2 per group) (teaching non-overlapping 5-hour shifts plus some preparation time)
1 unskilled assistant for 3-year-old group
1 special music-dancing teacher (part-time)
1 teacher's aide (circulating for four classes)
1 secretary (keeping accounts, shopping)

1 physician (several hours per week)
1 nurse (two full days per week)
1 cook
2 kitchen aides
2 charwomen (also help with meals, arrange cots for naps, etc.)
2 janitors (one day, one night)

Thus, even with the relatively low teacher:pupil ratio of 1:30 in the three older classes and 1:15 for three-year-olds for part of the day a total staff of 22 persons is involved, of whom 10 are trained pedagogues, 2 are medical personnel, and the remaining 10 are clerical, cooking, and cleaning staff and 2 teachers' aides. Assuming a full-time equivalence of approximately 20 persons, there is a ratio of adults to children of 1:6, quite a different matter than the 1:30 initially quoted. In addition, unlisted supervisory, higher-level administrative staff must also be taken into account when calculating real personnel costs.

It is appropriate to look at another system which also provides one teacher per class; here one finds a considerably lower adult:child ratio. The French ecoles maternelles provide a full-time director only when the number of classes exceeds 4. In an establishment of four classes, each with an average enrollment of about 40 children or a total of 160, one is likely to find the following:

4 teachers (including the directress)
2 charwomen to supervise children before and after school and at lunch, clean, and help with odd jobs
1 cook
2 kitchen helpers
1 janitor-gardner-handyman
1 secretary (usually half-time)
(0) medical personnel

Thus, there exists in France an adult:child ratio less than half that of the Polish preschool, or about 1:15.

At the other extreme, one finds extraordinarily high staff:child ratios in American and Swedish programs. Note that the new recommendations for sibling groups specify 4 teachers for 18 children in Sweden! Looking at figures from the 1970 full-year programs of Project Head Start (Bates, 1972), one can estimate an adult:child ratio of about 1:4, perhaps even higher if all volunteers are taken into account; the ratio is one adult to 7.6 children in the classroom at any given time.

Quantity of staff, then, is one feature clearly distinguishing among preschool developmental programs. Since staff costs are the primary expenditures for the program, since some staff require lengthy specialized training, and since the number of adults presumably has some effect on the children's behavior, one must proceed to ask a number of very significant questions--for which, alas, so far there are very few empirical answers.

There is, however, no dearth of opinion and conviction in this area!

We have asked many directors and teachers what they considered the optimal teacher:pupil ratio, and whether there should be more than one adult in the classroom. Almost everywhere, optimal classes for younger children were said to be somewhat smaller than those for older children, but there the agreement ended.

In France, Hungary, and Poland, examples of countries where classes tend to be large, teachers maintain that classes should be relatively large, perhaps 25-30, and that except for the youngest children, the only in-class assistance the teacher needs is with non-teaching tasks. Why? "Because in smaller classes the children tend to become too dependent on the teacher," for ideas, leadership, assistance, mothering. In Sweden, Great Britain, the United States, Israel and Switzerland, where classes tend to be smaller, teachers tend to favor classes of 15-20 children or fewer, staffed by more than one adult. Why? "Because children need individual attention"; "Their language develops better in the company of more adults"; "The teacher needs to be free to respond to each child when he needs her, or to capture the 'teachable moment'".

There are, it is evident, arguments on both sides. To put the question about optimal staffing ratios into terms which are at least potentially investigable by empirical methods, it is necessary to break it down into several components. Actually, two major questions are involved: one having to do with the optimal size of the children's group (class size), and the other with the optimal number of adults in the classroom (trained teachers, teachers' aides). Some of the matters discussed below bear on both these issues; some only on one or the other.

(a) Does an increase in the number of adults lead to a proportional increase in the actual amount of adult contact given to each child? The answer to this question is not so simple as it sounds. There are several possibilities: First, the adults can arrange the classroom activities and their own duties so that there will indeed be an increase in the amount of adult attention available. In a structured, teacher-led classroom, this may be accomplished by breaking the class into smaller groups, each with an adult leader. The smaller groups should make it easier to match the interests and developmental levels of the child, and to more effectively engage him. This assumes, though that the activities will be sensitively modulated in these terms, an assumption highly questionable in practice. In a free-play situation, it is much clearer that opportunities exist for increased adult-child interaction. Children scattering into the various interest "corners" can be contacted more frequently by two adults than by one.

Second, because teachers often have so many non-teaching duties, assistants can free them from being part-time nannies, part-time charwomen. On the other hand, aides may spend a considerable proportion of their time in activities which could be better done by a charwoman, or by the children themselves in accordance with pedagogic goals of developing a sense of responsibility and a feeling of accomplishment in doing worthwhile work. An interesting Hungarian study (Hermann, 1965), compared children from preschool classes in which there was a "nanny" and those in which there was none. The children were invited to help the cook in preparing lentils. Those from

classes without nannies worked much longer than did the others, presumably because the latter were not used to doing as much for themselves. Even when they did chores in the classroom, the nanny often re-did much of the work "to get it right."

Third, the proportion of time in which a child may find an adult available for one-to-one interaction may be a great deal higher in a two-adult situation. The questionning child may have to wait a long time to obtain answers from a single teacher. The distraction of an unhappy child, a sudden conflict, may be much more difficult for a teacher alone to handle than if there is someone with flexible time who can look after such matters. This is especially true in structured programs, dependent on teacher direction, yet paradoxically it is often these programs which have the fewest aides available.

Finally, the adults can spend a significant portion of time visiting with one another, chatting about non-essentials. Our own observations in the United States and abroad suggest that adults are particularly prone to talk with one another while feeding or rocking infants, and while on the playground, unless they are specifically assigned to monitor separate areas.

(b) What are the effects of various teacher:child ratios on the development of children? Do they learn faster when more adults are present? Are there more or fewer conflicts between children? What is the effect on their work habits, their performance of classroom duties, their self-help and independence? An especially sensitive index should be the children's verbal development, since it is this area which is universally judged to be of prime importance as a goal of preschool education, and it is also this aspect of behavior which has proven most vulnerable to retardation among institutionalized groups and younger children in large families.

(c) What are the effects of various teacher:child ratios on the behavior of teachers? Although we know no statistics on the subject, it has been asserted that in France, with its large classes, the turnover among teachers and the incidence of mental illness are alarmingly high. Both these indices should potentially be available to empirical analysis. Is it primarily the number of children under her care which affects the teacher? Does the amount of space per child also affect the level of tension? The kind of supervision? What is the effect of the presence of another adult with whom to share responsibility?

(d) What are the possibilities for career training introduced by various personnel arrangements? The secondary position in a classroom can be utilized for various forms of training. Personnel without formal training can be given practical help in this way, and mothers can in some circumstances also receive training. In each of the countries studied, the student teacher is required to serve an apprenticeship before she undertakes a classroom of her own. An apprenticeship can also be utilized as a period of selection among candidates for future training as teacher or children's nurse, as it is in Denmark and the Soviet Union.

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2. Staff Schedules

For those preschools and creches which provide full-day care for children of working mothers, it is an unavoidable fact of life that the center must be open longer hours than the typical working day. This is a result both of the differing hours of various mothers (and fathers) and the fact that the child must be cared for not only while the parents work, but during the mid-day meal and the time it takes for transportation as well. Every day care facility has, therefore, to work out a compromise of sorts in order to provide for the needs of children and staff, including some preparation time for teachers.

Various patterns are possible, each of which is to be found in use somewhere! (a) A single teacher may be assigned to each class, with early morning, late afternoon, and lunch hours supervised by an untrained person (e.g., in France). Similarly, an aide may overlap her daily schedule with that of the teacher so that one has early responsibilities and the other stays until the final child departs. (b) Because there are fewer children in early morning and late afternoon, teachers may combine their responsibilities, with all children arriving in one classroom and departing from another, the classes being separate during most of the day. (c) Two shifts of teachers may be provided for each classroom, sometimes overlapping for a few hours around the the noon meal. This permits a shorter work day (e.g., the Polish 5-hour day for teachers) and/or a longer preparation time (e.g., as in Hungary where each teacher has 1-2 hours preparation time). It is of interest to note that the U.S.S.R. has found it necessary to rotate shifts because teachers found the afternoon class to be less stimulating for them (one teacher has responsibility for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings with Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoons, etc.). One decided advantage of this shift system is that in case of illness, substitutions can be arranged by the pair of teachers themselves. This solves one of the most pressing problems in staffing preschool centers, the uncommon amount of staff illness due to contagious diseases.

3. Teacher Training

Although training requirements differ considerably from country to country, the typical degree for a fully qualified kindergarten teacher is earned on the basis of a two or three year course past the high school. The courses are almost always given at specialized institutions, not within the universities, and it is not necessarily expected that a student at such an institution would have been able to gain admission to a university. The usual level of education required is, then, somewhat less than the four or five years of training generally expected in the United States of early childhood educatiors.*

In some countries, alternate education routes are provided for preschool teachers. In the Soviet Union, for example, a preschool teacher may qualify

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*It should be noted here, though, how few preschool teachers in the United States, below kindergarten level, are fully trained.

after eight years of compulsory schooling plus a specialized vocational course lasting 3½ years. More complete training--a 5-year course--is offered to those who have finished 10 years of regular schooling; these teachers, who are in the minority in most schools, are much more likely to advance through the administrative heirarchy after some years. Poland also offers two levels of training, a 2-year post-high school vocational course and a 3-year program of teacher training in a university-affiliated academy. In Hungary, since 1959 a 2-year post-high-school course in a teacher's college is required to qualify as a teacher, but teachers without such qualifications can take a 3-year correspondence course which will yield a degree.

In France, preschool teachers are trained in the same classes as elementary school teachers but do their practice teaching in preschools. Depending upon when they enter the course, it takes from 2 to 5 years. Thus some girls enter while they are still at the high school level, bypassing the route to the baccalaureate (which permits entrance to the university), while others finish an academic high school and then enroll for teacher training. In either event, the last two years constitute the core of professional training.

In Great Britain, a 3-year training course in a College of Education is required after the high school level, although there is current recommendation to change this to a four year course comprised of 2 years of personal general education, 1 year of on-campus professional training, and a final year of professional training combining work and study.

In Sweden, a 2 year program follows completion of compulsory school years plus 16 weeks of pre-training supervised practice in an institution for children.

By and large, it appears that the more centralized the preschool system, the more centralized the systems of education through which teachers are trained. In some countries there are highly specific curricula which are uniform within the country, whatever the institution attended.* This is, for example, the case in the socialist countries and in Sweden; it is far from true in Great Britain, Israel, Switzerland, or the U.S.A.

It is apparently universally true that some practice teaching is required in the course of training. Sometimes practicum work is followed during the entire period of training, but it is more often reserved for late in the course of study. In fact, student helpers constitute quite a valuable source of help in many countries, particularly in Sweden and the U.S.S.R., where they are utilized quite openly as aides to experienced teachers.

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*Although we have gathered some superficial information about the professional courses for teachers, we will not include it here. We find that names of courses can be extremely misleading. Those which appear to be "methods" courses turn out to be theoretically oriented, etc.

4. Selection

Not all applicants for teacher and/or caretaking positions have the aptitude, the emotional stamina, and the other personal qualifications to work with preschool settings. Yet, very little has been done anywhere to establish objective selection procedures, aside from education and experience requirements. The one exception is an attempt in Budapest (Pikler, private communication) to devise an objective test for this purpose; its results are not known.

Educational criteria are common, usually the completion of compulsory schooling. Most countries also have an informal "experience with children" prerequisite, though this is variable and may often be fulfilled by being a mother, an older sister, etc. In Denmark, young girls entering training are required to have several months' experience with young children (recreational work, mother's helper, etc.) as well as to complete a few months'work in a day care center, under close scrutiny. In Sweden, 16 weeks of supervised work in a children's institution are required. Most of the careers aborted at this point are a matter of self-selection, as the girl finds herself unsatisfied with or anadapted to the work.

In a number of countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe, it is assumed that "a man simply cannot do the work" of a teacher, and certainly not do it as well as a woman. Women predominate on the staffs of centers; in fact, it is extremely rare to find a male teacher anywhere. This situation is decried in a few places--Sweden and Denmark, for example--and efforts are made to recruit males under the assumption that young children need both male and female role models. Sweden has made a special effort to train some, but the effort has apparently been more talked about than acted upon.

In the older, established programs (e.g., Hungary, U.S.S.R.), there are fairly well-regulated systems which select and provide about the number of teachers needed. It is thus possible to guarantee places to graduates of the programs. Countries such as Great Britain, though, seeking to expand preschool programs very rapidly, are finding that preparing teachers is the most severe bottleneck by far. A shortage of trained preschool teachers has certainly been a problem in the United States as well. In Italy, on the contrary, many more young women are given at least entry-level teacher training than can be employed; there, it is the employer who ultimately exerts selection rather than the training institution.

5. Supervision and Teacher Responsibility

Supervision can perform two functions: it can help the teacher to improve her effectiveness, and simultaneously it can furnish judgments to be used in decisions about retention and/or promotion. These two functions may be performed by the same person, by different people, or by none at all. In the countries studied, there is substantial inconsistency in the supervisory relationships between teachers and their superiors. The more centralized the system, of course, in general the greater number of bureaucratic layers in the heirarchy and the more formally spelled out the relationships. The degree of teacher autonomy tends to be inversely (but imperfectly) correlated with the degree of centralization. We have absolutely no way to judge the

efficacy of one formal set of relationships over another, and we suspect that the essence of effective supervision rests primarily with the particular supervisor and teachers concerned. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to look at a few systems of supervision to see the multiple ways in which they can be arranged.

In the private nurseries and kindergartens of Switzerland and the United States, at one end of the continuum, we find no supervision at all except such as may occur between the proprietor and any additional teachers and aides. In the public kindergartens in both countries, the heirarchy of the public schools exists; the teacher is responsible to the principal or headmaster and may, from time to time, confer with an early education specialist in the central office of the district, but in actual practice she has a great deal of autonomy in the classroom. In both countries, school policy and direction is highly localized.

In Israel, the director of the program may not be located at the site of the creche or school, but rather may belong to the staff of the sponsoring organization which has responsibility for a number of such locales. She conducts formal inservice courses, usually once a month, for the teachers, and meanwhile she travels from one center to another, within her district, to hold conferences with the teachers. At a higher level within the (private) organization, there are also additional supervisors who travel from district to district, conferring with directors and teachers, and there is liason with the supervisors within the Ministry of Welfare, but the latter exercise little direct control over the creches and classes. At the kindergarten level, where the Ministry of Education is responsible, there are supervisors operating on several levels of the administrative heirarchy. There are said to be problems of conflict arising from the fact that the supervisors dealing with the local schools operate on different administrative levels.

In the ecoles maternelles in France, the district inspectrice has a great deal of supervisory power. In the absence of a set curriculum, as exists above the preschool level, she has broad jurisdiction over the preschools and teachers under her command. There is substantial variation in the style and content of teaching from one district to another (as well, of course, as from one school and one classroom to another). Assisting the inspectrice there is usually a pedagogical assistant whose job it is to work with new teachers, to conduct in-service training, etc., and the directrice (principal) of each school must also devote some time to helping the other teachers, although if the school is small she will also have a class to teach herself. A special feature of the French system is that all civil servants--including teachers, supervisors, researchers, etc.,--are graded once a year by their immediate supervisors, using a 20-point rating scale like that they were graded on when they attended primary and secondary schools and universities. These grades are entered in permanent personnel records and determine to some extent chances for promotion, etc. Many feel that the grading system is inappropriate for adults and interferes with working relationships. In fact, few teachers are dismissed under this system and the anxiety it generates is said to be far out of proportion to the risk of censure.

The administrative supervisory levels within the centralized system, such

as the Polish and Soviet systems, tend to be rather specialized. In Poland, for example, there is a level of supervisors who are responsible for working with the administrators of the individual schools, and who are interested in the overall aspects of the program. These supervisors also confer with particular teachers and attempt to establish a cooperative working relationship; the supervisors are generally experienced pedagogues themselves. In addition, however, there are other supervisors who deal specifically with educational aspects of the program, administrative aspects, sanitary, health conditions, nutritional and other matters. Many of these find their ways into the individual schools as well, although not so often as the others.

The problems in this area are difficult to evaluate, especially because it is difficult for a visitor to talk frankly with the teachers and with persons on the lower administrative levels. There is a feeling of a large and unwieldy bureaucracy in some systems, such as those in Poland and the Soviet Union. There is also the strong impression that what would work well in one situation might not work so well in another. In Britain, Switzerland, and Sweden, for example, teachers apparently relish their independence and tend to feel they would not work well under a system requiring a more structured relationship with a supervisor; in situations where clear lines of authority permeate most aspects of living (e.g., Hungary, Poland, the U.S.S.R.), the teachers seem to expect to prepare lesson plans, to have these checked, and otherwise to receive guidance from those in higher positions of authority.

I. Buildings

Unfortunately, it was impossible to pursue the systematic study of building plans available in all these countries. Our remarks in this section will, therefore, be limited to a few features concerning the buildings which seemed most salient to us as interested visitors to a large number of preschool establishments.

(a) The most important point, surprisingly, is that it is essential that preschool staff be intimately involved in drawing up plans for preschools, whether they be for the local school alone or for wholesale use throughout the country. To cite a case in point, we visited a very lovely preschool in Hungary, quite new, which seemed to us to be unsuitable in many ways for its purpose. The rather small classrooms occupied less than 25 per cent of the total space. An entire wing was given over to administrative and medical offices which were unoccupied most of the time, and there were large interior waiting rooms for parents although the parents left their children at the outside door to be greeted by a nanny stationed there. Large amounts of space were devoted to dressing rooms for each class, and to spacious bathrooms which could be used by all the children at once. While the separate dressing rooms are a typical feature of preschools in Eastern Europe, these had been carried to extremes.

Furthermore, there were very attractive, bright tile walls in several of the classrooms which were extremely artistic but at the same time distracting and inflexible, and they were heartily disliked by the teachers. In this same preschool, by contrast, the outdoor play space had been developed by a team composed of teachers and landscape architects, and never have we seen more

attractive or useful space, divided into separate areas by subtle barriers (e.g., low shrubs) so that the very large number of children accommodated there were able to function in small, active and spontaneous groups, while under the visual surveillance of their teachers.

(b) As in other matters, a continuum exists in the matter of centralization of designs for preschools. In some places, such as the Soviet Union, sets of plans are developed which vary mainly in size, although in the rural areas some adaptations are made, and local building materials are used as much as possible. A preschool of a given vintage in Moscow is almost identical to one in Kiev. Although the various republics retain control over nearly all matters pertaining to their schools, apparently they tend to accept building plans published in Moscow.

In France, on the other hand, each local school tends to be planned individually, though in the larger cities of course there may be repetition of plans. Architects are certified by the state as qualified to design preschools, by virtue of special training or experience, and local communities pick their architects from those available. Because the local community is required to contribute to the costs of the building, and in particular is responsible for special features not included in the basic requirements issued by the state, there is a good deal of local autonomy in these matters.

In other countries such as Israel, central agencies have designed plans, but because the preschools are actually operated by a number of different agencies, there is little compunction to use the suggested designs. It should be noted that, among the Kibbutzim, the baby and children's houses are usually among the first of the permanent structures, and are a source of pride and concern in the community. Although they are not lavishly furnished, they are generally spacious and represent the best the kibbutz can do for its children.

(c) The stricture which we have strongly maintained in this country that preschools must be on ground level is not followed in many other places. There are commonly two-story structures in urban areas in France, Poland, Hungary, and the Soviet Union, for example, as well as in other countries. Although this system requires stairs and extra fire protection, it is felt that it affords a greater amount of outdoor play space than other systems, and outdoor play even in winter is highly valued.

(d) At the same time, as noted above, there tends to be a specificity and rigidity about the use of space which seems quite surprising to an American visitor. Although meals are generally served in the children's rooms rather than a cafeteria, there are often to be found separate bedrooms with permanent beds, quite open to the out-of-doors but unoccupied except for nap times. (This practise seems to make a good deal of sense with infants who sleep at irregular hours, but much less so for older children.) There are also dressing rooms for each class and large bathrooms designed for simultaneous use by most of the children, which most Americans would consider a waste of facilities. Separate music rooms (sometimes doubling for gymnastics, etc.) are likewise provided, though in the larger schools these tend to be in constant use. In some schools, moreover (e.g., France and the upper

levels in the Soviet Union), individual permanent desks also take up a good bit of the classroom space. This rigid use of space tends to reduce the amount of free space available for spontaneous play and expansive movement within the classroom. On the other hand, in Sweden and Denmark creches and schools tend to be much more flexible and generous in their provision of multiple-use classroom space, and the classrooms often open directly onto large outdoor play areas.

J. Curriculum and Methods

In many ways, the "heart of the matter" in early childhood education exists in the actual interactions between children and teacher. It is unfortunate that the limited scope of our investigation for this project precluded a detailed examination of the nature of these interactions, but that would indeed far have exceeded the resources available. Perhaps a few comments are in order, however, before closing this discussion of early education abroad.

To the extent that planning enters the determination of classroom behavior, a curriculum may be said to exist. Although there is some verbal disagreement about the kinds of activities and teaching which are said to be suitable foci of early childhood education, and about the degree to which these activities should be mapped out in advance, all pedagogues with whom we spoke agreed that the developmental qualities of early education are enhanced by prior planning.

Indeed, the area of curriculum planning manifests the greatest superficial diversity, the greatest controversy, and at the same time the greatest concentration of effort seen in any aspect of preschool education. Passions run high, but evidence does not, about the values of one approach over another, the wisdom of central planning versus teacher planning, the type of cognitive content which is suitable for one type (or age) of child or another, the amount of structure which should characterize good teaching, the amount of emphasis to be given to the preparation of self-teaching materials, the role of the teacher as active leader vs. supporter of discovery, etc.

Yet, despite all this controversy, our observations of preschool education in the countries we have visited suggest that there are more similarities than differences among programs, and that differences among classrooms in a single country (especially countries emphasizing teacher determination) may be considerably greater than the differences existing between countries.

In any preschool, it is rare to see behavior on the part of the children or of the teacher which would be deemed unacceptable in any other. By and large, there are caring and gentle adults who interact with lively and curious children; teachers praise good behavior rather than scold the bad; children play "house" and "doctor" and "dress-up"; there are blocks, balls, dolls, books, trucks, water, sand, paints, clay, live animals and plants; bright and cheerful classrooms are almost always organized into "corners of interest"; most everyone talks and seems to be learning; music and dancing are a part of every program; there is much laughter and a few tears. In any discussion of differences among curricula, one must not forget the strong commonalities,

the shared assumptions, and the large areas of understanding which exist among pedagogues (and parents) of many different nations.

The curricula in use range from very detailed instructions for each day of the year (as, for example, in Cuban preschools) to extremely loose guidelines leaving almost all the initiative to the teacher (e.g., in France, Great Britain, Sweden). Some curricula (e.g., Montessori) specify very concrete behavioral goals and the methods to achieve them; others leave the goals much more implicit, or much more abstractly stated. Some specify activities for the entire class working as a group; others let small groupings of children occur as they will, the teacher aiding groups or individuals as the opportunities arise. Even when curricula are rather highly specified (e.g., the Hungarian and Soviet preschool lessons), these activities actually occur for brief periods of up to a half hour, and most of the day is spent in more spontaneous activities.

The primary locus of responsibility for planning falls in most instances into one of three categories. In France, Great Britain, Israel, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States, the teachers have primary responsibility for determining classroom curriculum. Varying resources may be made available to them by publications of professional associations and/or ministries, the results of experimental programs, etc. They are also likely to be assisted by supervisory and/or training personnel in the school or the district. (In Great Britain, the headmistress of the Infant School has a great deal of influence; in France, the directrice and inspectrice also do.)

Responsibility for developing curricula may also be given over to researchers, typically developmental psychologists and educators (sometimes with the assistance of health professionals), with the expectation that new programs will be tried out, revised, and tested before being made available to preschools in the system. In the Soviet Union, for instance, such programs are developed under the auspices of the Institute for Preschool Education; in Israel, similar to the situation in the United States, compensatory programs in particular have been developed and tested by researchers before being made broadly available. Finally, it is often personnel within the Ministry of Education itself who develop and publish new curricula, with a minimal "research" base. In some instances, these curricula are relatively specific (e.g., Hungary, Yugoslavia) and in others, general policy is determined in the Ministry while implementation is left to the local scene.

There are advantages and disadvantages to each system. The usefulness of a coherent curriculum, whether mandatory or voluntary, is that the best available knowledge about child development and education can be brought to bear; a greater fund of material resources can be made available when mass produced; the time and energies of the teacher are conserved; the opportunities to test contrasting approaches and to evaluate their effectiveness can be taken advantage of; and especially for teachers with limited training or inventiveness, further education can be provided in part by the curriculum itself. Furthermore, curricula provide the possibility of working out carefully modulated and sequential steps to achieve behaviorally defined goals of development, almost impossible to achieve on an ad hoc basis by a single teacher; and finally, a teacher may well feel, when armed with a curriculum, a special

confidence and sense of purpose when she is sure she is doing "the right thing" for the child--whatever that may be. The dangers of this approach, of course, are that when the importance of the published curriculum is over-emphasized, it tends to become rigidified and bureaucratized, valued for itself instead of being seen as one of several possible means to desired ends; in addition, the creative and innovative talents of staff, directors, and concerned citizens may be overlooked if it is felt that the job is already done and the means prescribed.

It seems clear that intelligent and informed planning of classroom activities is essential, and that furthermore, the progression through the preschool years must be carefully arranged to achieve multiple goals. It is equally clear, however, that centrally determined curricula which seem so acceptable in some systems would be quite inappropriate in others, and that the national context likewise affects the optimal modes for both the teachers and the children. It is abundantly clear that no single curriculum will be the best suited for all countries or all children.

K. Conclusions

After a survey of this nature, one is struck by contrasts between certain aspects of early child care in the United States and abroad. In particular one is struck by the assumptions which are not questioned.

Practically nowhere among the countries surveyed, for example, was active research taking place of the kind which is typical in this country. To be sure, the Soviet curriculum is based upon research of a kind (what we might consider a rather informal "try-out"), and there one finds an experimental outlook if not rigorous experimental methods. In Israel, too, one finds some reasonable research efforts, particularly those concerned with the effectiveness of compensatory programs and with aspects of child development on the kibbutz (much of the research financed, in fact, by American funds). Aside from these exceptions, however, questions about the efficacy of various methods and patterns of care, the short-range or the long-range effects of early education, etc., are simply left unasked. One figures out what to do, and one does it. In France, for example, where early education is so widespread, it is only within the past few years that a research unit has been established in the Ministry of Education to inquire into matters dealing with the ecole maternelle, and that unit is extremely small. Neither evaluation of programs nor follow-up of preschool pupils is thought necessary.

Other unasked questions have to do with the structure and function of the society with regard to families and young children. In the United States, we are accustomed to a great deal of self-criticism, perhaps to an obsessive self-questioning and a pervasive feeling that we are failing our children. Among the countries surveyed, with the principal exceptions of Great Britain and Sweden, public debate about these matters is not particularly prominent at this time.

There are, we judge, obvious disadvantages to a lack of self-criticism and an unwillingness to apply empirical methods to test the consequences of methods, staffing patterns, etc. Yet, in contrast with the deep uncertainties which beset American preschool programs and personnel, one notes a degree of

conviction and purposiveness in most preschool programs we have observed abroad, attitudes which are likely to constitute a positive influence on the security of children and the effectiveness of the teaching and socialization which they experience. This is, of course, just an untested hunch....

At the same time, the variations which we have noted throughout this paper in almost every dimension of early childhood education suggest that there are areas which--despite the statements above--Americans have not yet got around to questioning! In particular, there are apparently very good programs going on with much lower ratios of teachers to children than we have in this country, in much larger centers, etc. Maximally qualified teachers abroad seldom have the number of years of education considered necessary in this country, although they typically do have two to three years of special preparation for their jobs. With regard to goals for children, there are a number of facets of personality development--in particular, what might be termed character development (qualities of helpfulness, perseverance, love of work, teamwork, etc.)--which we seldom regard as the concern of the preschool, and yet which form the sine qua non of programs in other countries, most specifically the socialist nations.

In short, there is much which can be gained from a continuing dialogue and interchange among professionals in countries with differing approaches to the care of the young, asking differing sets of questions. Wherever we visited, we found much ignorance on the part of most well-informed early educators about what was going on outside their own borders--a typical situation in this country as well. There are exceptions: Sweden is currently debating a rapid expansion of its preschool program along the lines of the British Infant Schools, and among the socialist nations, there is considerable familiarity with the Soviet curricula and methods. Still, in all these countries, there is an eagerness to share information, to gain perspective and to enrich their child care programs. This is a healthy state of affairs, we think, and one to be fostered by continued visitation, international exchanges, and subsidized translation services.

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